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HISTORY OF THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR

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HISTORY OF THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR

By REV. A. LEROY

Former Chaplain of the Little Sisters of the Poor at the Mother House

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE AUTHOR

CROWNED BY THE ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE

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IMPRIMATUR

F. DURUSSELLE,
Vicar General.

RENNES,
July 18, 1901.

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RICARDUS A. O'GORMAN, O.S.A.,
Censor Deputatus.

IMPRIMI POTEST
GULIELMUS PRÆPOSITUS JOHNSON,
Vicarius Generalis.

WESTMONASTERII,
Die 28 *Martii*, 1906

Made and Printed in Great Britain

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APPROBATION

DEAR REVEREND FATHER,

The position you hold has enabled you to acquire a perfect knowledge of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and I congratulate you upon having undertaken to write their history, and, above all, upon having succeeded so well.

In our days, when men teach that we must no longer believe in God nor in His Providence, it was fitting to place before their eyes the great example of humble religious, who for the love of God devote themselves to the works of charity that are most repugnant to nature. It was well to point out to them women, deprived of every resource and relying only on Providence, who provide for the daily wants of their 42,000 aged poor.

At the present time, in which religious congregations in Europe are the objects of so many assaults and persecutions, it was necessary to lift cautiously a corner of the veil that hides the admirable and even heroic virtues which they practise with a courage and constancy only equalled by their modesty.

The history of the Little Sisters of the Poor which

you have just published, by its simple narration of facts, puts these two truths in the clearest light.

Faith in God and in His Providence alone can explain the sublime idea Jeanne Jugan had conceived, to nourish, with alms collected from door to door, the aged poor, whom in her charity she had gathered in a poor garret of Saint-Servan.

Faith in God and in His Providence accounts for the rule she imposed on her daughters, never to accept for their poor either income or rent, but to beg each day what was necessary for their sustenance.

Faith in God and in His Providence: these words are written on the first and last page of the history of the 280 homes of the Little Sisters of the Poor, each one of which is established and lives only by daily collections.

The charming simplicity with which your book relates their modest and sublime virtues renders them most attractive.

It is impossible to read, without being deeply touched, the details you give of the life of the "Little Sisters" in their old people's sitting-rooms, in their infirmaries, in their daily collections, where, in spite of rebukes and sometimes insults, they remain gentle and assiduous. In presence of a like spectacle it is impossible not to praise God, who inspires and maintains such devotedness and virtue.

I hope, dear Reverend Father, that this book,

written with perfect tact, and with that noble simplicity so suitable to the subject, may spread rapidly and be read by all, rich and poor; it will make the Little Sisters of the Poor and their admirable work better known and loved, and thus help to put down more than one prejudice, and bring back souls to God.

Accept, dear Reverend Father, with many thanks, the expression of my sincere devotion in Christ our Lord.

S. CARD. VANNUTELLI,
Protector of the Congregation of
the Little Sisters of the Poor.

ROME,
April 10, 1902.

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HISTORY

OF THE

LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR

FIRST PART

IN EUROPE

THE Little Sisters of the Poor came into existence in France in the nineteenth century. God gave the Order for its birthplace Brittany, a country remarkable for its attachment to the Catholic faith and its customs, and chose for its cradle Saint-Servan, of which the suburbs adjoin those of Saint-Malo, by the seaside. In Brittany is to be met the type of young girls—simple, of modest demeanour, pure face, and religious soul—from whom the first Little Sisters were to be chosen. There the different social ranks come closer together. Often the poor traveller, asking charity at the farm door, receives temporary hospitality, is given a seat at the hearthside, or the table, and a shelter under the roof for the night, till the next morning he goes on his way. In families the mode of life is frugal; there is order, economy, and thrift; their tastes are simple. But in the depths of these souls, notwithstanding their simple manners, there are often treasures of patience, will,

and faith. This spirit of simplicity stamps the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and is maintained in its rules and constitution.*

* A study on the Work of the Little Sisters of the Poor is placed at the end of this volume, and should be referred to by those little acquainted with the subject before reading the history of the Little Sisters.

CHAPTER I

THE SMALL BEGINNINGS

The foundresses—The curate of Saint-Servan—In the autumn of 1839—A new contrivance in the domain of charity—The original asylum.

JEANNE JUGAN was born at Cancale in 1792, during the great Revolution in France. In her childhood she tended cattle and sheep on the high cliffs overlooking the magnificent bay and the fisheries. She was a pious, simple, industrious girl, and being the oldest child, she had to take care of her brother and two sisters, besides assisting her mother in the household management. The view of the ever-changing ocean and regular attendance at church developed in her the habit of meditation and constant thought of God, while stories of the horrors of the Revolution, and of the accidents, sufferings, and frequent loss of life among the fishermen of Newfoundland, awakened her spirit of compassion. When she was eighteen years of age, a fisherman asked her hand in marriage, but while he was on a sea voyage, having attended a mission which was then given at Cancale, Jeanne declared that she would never marry. Repeatedly she told her people: "God wants me for Himself. God keeps me for His own work."

At the age of twenty-five, she entered the Rosais Hospital at Saint-Servan as a nurse, and later she

became the servant and companion of Miss Le Coq, who lived in the Rue du Centre, and shared her life of piety and good works. On her deathbed, this kind-hearted woman bequeathed her furniture to Jeanne, who by strict economy, had managed to save six hundred francs. Jeanne was noted for her sweetness and equanimity, and was respected, notwithstanding her somewhat peculiar manners. Not having been able to realize her desire of consecrating herself to the life of a religious, she became a tertiary of the Sacred Heart, a kind of half-secular, half-religious Order, then widely spread in Brittany.*

She now associated herself with a retired aged domestic servant, named Françoise Aubert. Together they rented two rooms, with a garret above, in an unpretentious house near the church, the ground-floor being occupied by other lodgers. They reached their lodging by a winding stair, with a rope for baluster, and at the end of the second room a steep ladder led to the garret, which was entered by raising a trap-door. Françoise had a small income left her by a priest whom she had served long and faithfully as housekeeper; and now she worked at home, spinning wool, while Jeanne went out as a sick nurse, an occupation much to her taste, as it gave her ample opportunity of exercising her spirit of charity. Jointly these two pious women served God and devoted themselves to all kinds of good works.

In the same town lived Marie Jamet and Virginie

* The Third Order of the Sacred Heart was established by St John Eudes in 1648.

Tredaniel, both of whom were born near Saint-Servan —Marie in the village of Lambéty on January 20, 1820, and Virginie near the city on December 7, 1821. Both went to school a short time with the nuns, attended the catechetical instructions in the parish church, and made their first Communion devoutly.

Marie Jamet lived quietly with her parents, helping to rear her two brothers and her sister, to keep house, and to tend the little grocery and vegetable store which her mother kept, while her father, who was a mason, worked at his trade. Marie was pious, intelligent, open-hearted and kind. While yet a child, she frequently went with her aunt on her customary visits to the Hospital of Saint-Malo, and the little girl manifested great happiness in roaming through the wards. As she grew up, she habitually visited sick neighbours, read to them, watched by their bedside at night with the permission of her parents, and obtained assistance for them from rich people.

Virginie Tredaniel was a sailor's daughter, and her mother was employed in a rope-yard. The only surviving child, she was reared by her grandmother like other girls of her station in life, mostly on the sea-beach. As a child she was good-natured, sensitive, and lively. Scarcely had she attained to maidenhood when her mother died, and she had to support herself by sewing. Other sorrows came upon her successively, and, left wholly to herself and her own resources, her condition became critical, when Mr. Guazon, her guardian, who was a member of the town council, succeeded

in finding her a home. Françoise Aubert and Jeanne Jugan received, with true Christian charity, the young girl entrusted to their care. These three now began a community life which was destined to be permanent. Virginie continued, under their care, to work at her trade as a seamstress, and went out daily. Divine Providence overruled all these events.

On January 18, 1838, a new curate arrived at Saint-Servan. His name was Auguste Marie Le Pailleur; he was of small stature, and a native of Saint-Malo, where he was born on July 17, 1812. His father had a modest position in the Custom House, and his mother kept a little business. After having completed his studies at the college of Saint-Malo, he entered the seminary at Rennes, and for two years he had exercised his sacred calling at Gevezé, in the country. From the very beginning of his ministry in the beautiful parish of Saint-Servan, it was observed that most of the poor children who came to catechism, as well as the sick and abandoned, appealed to him in their misfortune. By this contact with misery, his soul seemed to expand, and the idea of some work of charity began to occupy his mind.

Among his penitents were Marie and Virginie. As they were Children of Mary, they took part in the meetings of the confraternity. Their director was not long in perceiving that they were full of energy aspiring to a religious life and filled with zeal for charity. Under his patronage they contracted a holy friendship. Virginie received a hearty welcome in the family of her friend, and Marie fre-

quently visited Jeanne and Françoise, in order to perfect herself in the art of dressmaking. Thus God, through apparently natural circumstances, brought together and united the elements of His work.

The two young girls felt the need of a rule of life. They drew it up themselves, and the priest revised it. A regular order was to be followed in the employment of their time daily. This included exercises of meditation, recollection, examination of conscience, assistance at Mass, frequentation of the Sacraments, and the exercise of Christian virtues. They had discovered on the beach of Rosais, outside the town, a rocky cave in the cliff. It was a solitary spot in the beautiful landscape at the mouth of the Rance. Every Sunday after church they went there, and in this oratory, formed by Nature, they conferred about matters pertaining to religion and the observance of their rules. This continued for two years, from 1838 to 1840. In the confessional, their director encouraged them in their mode of life.

One article in their rules deserves to be quoted, as it shows the spirit that animated this little society: "Towards our neighbour we will practise all the duties of charity in our power. We will strive, above all, to be kind and gentle to children, the poor, the sick, and the infirm, and we will never refuse them our care when they need it." Thus charity was the ruling principle, though not yet specialized.

We now come to the beginning of the work of the

Little Sisters. An historic document, bearing the date of December 21, 1844, drawn up by the Rev. A. M. Le Pailleur, adorned by all the signatures of the Administration, and preserved in the archives of the French Academy, runs thus: "We, the undersigned, being eye-witnesses of the heroic charity of a poor girl, who for many years has devoted herself to the relief of the unfortunate in the town of Saint-Servan, believe it our duty to call attention to a virtue so generous, and to bring it to the notice of the members of the committee charged with the award of prizes for virtuous deeds (founded by Mr. de Montyon). This poor girl, far from thinking that she had merited any prize, begged, with tears in her eyes, that no mention should be made of her, but at last she consented, in the interest of the poor. Jeanne Jugan was born at Cancale, in the village of Petites-Croix, October 28, 1792, etc."

Although Saint-Servan had a fairly large population, consisting chiefly of mariners, whose number was often sadly reduced by the dangers of the sea, thus leaving their aged parents without means of support, Saint-Servan had as yet no almshouse, no place of shelter for the aged poor of either sex, so that misfortune and want were the general lot of the aged poor. Their sad condition softens the heart of Jeanne, and she undertakes their succour. But how is she to do it? She has no means. It does not matter. She puts her trust in God. . . . At the beginning of the winter, 1839, she learns that a poor old woman, blind and infirm, has just lost her sister, who was her only support, having

till now taken care of her and procured for her her daily bread. Touched by her sad fate, Jeanne took the old woman to her own house and treated her as a mother. To feed this poor woman, her first pensioner, does not disturb her much: she only works later each night. Shortly afterwards an old servant, who had not only served her master and mistress faithfully and without pay, when misfortunes had overwhelmed them in their old age, but had also remained with them until their death, and spent all her savings to support them. When these were exhausted she had gone out begging bread for them and for herself. She now comes, feeble and infirm, to Jeanne, and tells of her sorrowful plight, and is at once received joyfully into her home. The maiden name of the first was Anne Chauvin, now known as Widow Harraux; the name of the servant, Isabelle Quéru.

In the house of Jeanne Jugan, which had thus become the first hospice for old people, were grouped the elements prepared by Providence. The remembrance of what took place on October 15, 1840, has been preserved. On that day the Rev. Abbé Le Pailleur, Jeanne, Marie, and Virginie met for the first time in the presence of their beloved poor; from this day, which was the Feast of Saint Teresa, the work of hospitality, already practised in Jeanne's modest dwelling, was characterized by stability and united effort.

Two months later, in December, a young person of Saint-Servan called Madeleine Bourges fell dangerously ill. She occupied a small room, which

her former master and mistress had given her in recognition of faithful service, and she earned her living by going out washing. Thinking she was at death's door, she wished to leave her earnings and her few belongings to the poor; but Jeanne and Françoise took her home with them, and under their careful nursing she recovered. Madeleine became thus acquainted with the "little work," and, having regained her health, she desired to consecrate to charity the life which God had given her back. She was a most valuable recruit.

Jeanne continued going out to work by day and looking after the needs of her "good women" in the morning and evening, while Françoise and Virginie took care of them during the day. Marie, who lived with her parents, and Madeleine, who lived in her little room, came as often as possible to labour for the benefit of all.

The work was yet in a rudimentary state, but at Michaelmas, 1841, its development began. During the summer a house had been rented for 100 francs a year, close to Port Solidor and near the church. It was a long, low structure, divided in two by a partition. The earthen floor was damp, and the light entered one room by a glass door and the other through a large chimney. Two small windows close to the ceiling looked out on a narrow lane and transmitted a little light. There was neither cellar nor attic, the back room taking the place of both, while the front room served as a living-room. On December 27 they entered this modest dwelling; they dispensed with carts; all their goods were

carried in bundles on their arms, or wheeled on a hand-barrow. There were five wooden bedsteads, two cupboards, a table, a few chairs, cooking utensils, linen, and other clothing. Françoise Aubert, Jeanne, and Virginie installed themselves there that very day, and the household was increased by four more poor women. A month later there were twelve, as many as the house could hold. Rev. de Bonteville, the parish priest of Saint-Servan, came to bless the house and the poor old women.

"Twelve poor old women," continues the official document, "find there shelter. But what is Jeanne going to do to feed them? What little money she had saved is already spent. But charity sharpens her wit. 'As I have no more bread to give them,' she says, 'I will go out and beg it for them; it will be easier for me to beg than for these poor unfortunate women, broken down by age and infirmities.' She now proceeds to realize her idea: she asks each of the poor women the name of such benefactors and benefactresses as had hitherto assisted her, and she goes herself to solicit alms for them. All gave readily and with good reason; for whereas previously these unfortunate women had had to suffer the fatigue and the humiliation of begging, and too often made bad use of what had been given them, Jeanne took upon herself this task in their place, and the givers are sure their alms will be well and properly disposed of. Thus substituting themselves for, or superseding the poor, as it were, all entered with joy and without hesitation on this work of self-denial and new phase of devotedness. It was a decisive act, and one which

had, for the future of the hospitaller family, the greatest consequences. Henceforth the *quête* or collection of alms becomes an essential part of the work, and besides supplying the means of living, it stamps it with a new seal of charity.

"Stimulated by her example," the memoir proceeds, "three persons unite with her and share her cares and fatigues. They devote themselves to the most unpleasant duties in the house, with untiring zeal and even at the expense of their own health, while the indefatigable Jeanne multiplies her outdoor work in proportion as the number of her poor increased."

A lady of that town relates how, when she was a little girl, her godmother said to her one morning: "My darling, I am going to take you to see the 'Jeanne Jugan.'" They entered the home, where seats were rare and the beds close together. The child seated herself on a stool between two beds, the covers of which were made of patchwork. Her godmother was received by two cheerful, modest young girls, with pleasant faces, with whom she conversed with animation and interest. These were Marie Jamet and Virginie Tredaniel. The little girl watched Jeanne Jugan. She had only smiled pleasantly and made a little bow to her two visitors, as she was getting ready to go out begging. She put on her cloak, adjusted her head-dress, and picked up her basket, which everyone in the town knew so well. The good women called her Sister Jeanne. "Sister Jeanne," they said, "be our good substitute; beg for us. Don't forget our little

messages, ask for our tobacco and coppers." Jeanne stooped to receive a few more confidential petitions which they whispered to her, then with a smile, she left them. She accomplished everything promptly without ever seeming to be in a hurry. The child admired the neatness that reigned in this large and badly-lighted room, with its poor furniture.

From the commencement of the society, Françoise attended to the housekeeping; Virginie contributed her earnings and prolonged her hours of labour till far into the night; Madeleine went out washing during the day, and worked at her spinning-wheel in the evening. Marie, still with her parents, yet wishing to do her part, bought and sold vegetables for the benefit of the poor. On Sundays, they took the good women to church, and this procession attracted public attention and caused comment. Some found this devotion very beautiful; others expressed disapproval of the enterprise. But the good work went on, and as other poor people sought admission, it was proposed to enlarge the premises.

A lady in easy circumstances and of generous disposition, Miss Doynel, approved of the undertaking and offered to be security. Now there was in a quiet street, not far from the church, an old convent which was for sale. The parish priest encouraged his curate, who became the official head of the work in the parish, affixed his signature to the deed as security, and even sold his silver chalice and gold watch to help to pay for the house. The property was bought for 20,000 francs, and the deed was made out on February 2, 1842.

This success aroused many unfavourable comments. What did all this mean—this convent, these young girls, this begging system, these old women? Was there any prospect that this work would be permanent? If one wanted to establish a nunnery, would it not be better to give the house to experienced Sisters? If the experiment did not succeed, it would be depriving the town of an hospice sorely needed. With public opinion on their side, the gloomy prophets attempted to bring the two securities over to their views, but both had the wisdom and the foresight not to commit themselves to an opinion, which might appear prudent and reasonable. Some ladies had already formed a pious association called the "Petite Œuvre," having for object to establish a home for children and a hospice for old women. Would this new enterprise about to be transferred to the convent recently purchased damage the "Petite Œuvre" and reduce it to the level of parochial almshouses? The bishop was appealed to as mediator. He decided that the new society had a right to purchase the convent in question, and that the pious ladies' association should continue as originally planned.

But there still remained some opposition. One incident will show the state of affairs. Jeanne Jugan used to go to the Board of Charity. Hitherto this distinction had been made in her behalf: while awaiting her turn on distribution days, she was not obliged to mingle with the beggars, but was allowed to enter the courtyard. She was now told rudely, by one of the ladies, that the courtyard was not her

proper place, and that she should remain outside with the others. Jeanne submitted without a murmur. Placed thus on a level with mendicants, she raised her eyes to God, thought of her poor, and came each time to await her turn, as if she were begging for herself. Finally, early in August, 1842, the Board of Charity withdrew the bread, linen, and other assistance, which they had given to the poor, before their entrance into the hospice, and which they had hitherto continued to allow them. The Board preferred to relieve other pressing wants. That was to be expected, but meanwhile there was a scarcity of linen in the home. To remedy this the Good Mother in Heaven was invoked during the Feast of the Octave of the Assumption.

With the assistance of a kind gendarme, Monsieur Brisard, who took pleasure in repairing the bedsteads, spinning-wheels, and bobbins for these good women, they put up an altar. He brought the window curtains from his room to cover the boards, and his wife's veil for the statue of the Blessed Virgin. Others brought flowers and what was needed for the decoration of the altar in blue and white. Then the Servants of the Poor placed at the feet of the Blessed Virgin what linen they possessed, and addressed to her this supplication: "Good Mother, behold our distress, we have not a change of linen for your children." Then, removing their rings and earrings, the treasured ornaments of their youth, they offered them to the Child Jesus, by hanging them on the statue. This decoration drew many people to the convent, where religion and piety combined to touch

their hearts. A quantity of linen and clothing was deposited before the altar, even an entire piece of cloth, besides many other gifts, so that what had been regarded as a calamity became a means of making the work known and of attracting benefactors.

CHAPTER II

THE SMALL BEGINNINGS

The Servants of the Poor—The Superior of the Brothers of Saint John of God—In community—The formation of the rule—The Sisters of the Poor—The memoir at the Academy and the Montyon prize.

THE association, meanwhile, had become partly organized. The spiritual gatherings begun in the grotto on the banks of the Rance, were continued in the garret of the first house without much difficulty, but in the second it was not so easy. A good neighbour, Mrs. Mignot, lent them a room in her house, and so they continued their religious formation, by assembling there from time to time. The acquisition of the ancient convent strengthened their hopes; Virginie even went to school for five or six months, in order to obtain a little learning.

The time for forming a constitution seemed to have come. On May 29, Jeanne, Marie, Madeleine, and Miss Doynel assembled in the house of the good lady, under the presidency of the curate. A Superior was to be named, and a rule drawn up. Jeanne was fifty years of age; she lived with the old women, and from her begging, was the best known—these were so many providential circumstances. She was unanimously elected. The Servants of the Poor—for that was the title they adopted—declared aloud their resolution to obey her, without binding themselves

by a vow under pain of sin, but only because by obeying they would do a more perfect thing. To the rule were added several exercises of modesty, obedience, and poverty; with a little modification the article of the primitive rule concerning their work was inserted: "They devoted themselves to the care of the sick and aged poor, or of others who should have any infirmity, of all ages and of both sexes, according as the will of God should be manifested." These were by no means the rules of the religious state, nor the constitutions of the future work; but they contained the germ, and were a movement in that direction. On July 10, at the same place, the rule was read to Virginie; she also promised to observe it and to obey the newly-elected Superior. On August 15, in the same room, before vespers, the three young Servants of the Poor, in the presence of their Director and of their Superior (who had promised the same as tertiary) made the simple vow of chastity for six months. Thus, little by little, was the material building and the spiritual edifice raised.

Providence had prepared a faithful friend, an enlightened and judicious counsellor, in the person of Father Felix Massat, the Superior of the establishment of the Brothers of Saint John of God at Dinan. This man of God understood the little work at Saint-Servan; he loved it, and compared it to the beginning of his own Order at Granada. He gave to the service of the humble association his experience of the hospitaller and religious life; he especially recommended them to give themselves to prayer, and to the holy

abnegation of the Cross, in preparation for the difficulties they would have to pass through; and, strangely enough, he even sent, on August 29, 1842, a diploma of union in prayer, thus conceived:

"Brother Benedict Verno, the humble servant and Prior-General of the hospitaller Order of Saint John of God, to the well-beloved in Christ the Reverend Father Le Pailleur, priest, and also to the Reverend Mother, Jeanne Jugan, the Superior of the young persons tending the aged infirm of both sexes in the parish of Saint-Servan, and equally to all and each of the Superiors and their companions existing now and in the future: this document is to remain in force for one hundred years [here follows a statement of the favours].

"De Magallon, *Provincial.*
"Fr. Felix Massat, *Socius of the Provincial.*

"Dinan,
"*August* 29, 1842."*

What a touching spectacle! The hospitaller Order of Saint John of God receiving the hospitaller family at its entrance into life, as if to serve for its spiritual

* Fr Benedictus Verno, minimus servus, Prior generalis Ordinis hospitalitatis sancti Joannis de Deo. Dilmo in Christo, D. admodum reverendo Patri Le Pailleur sacerdoti, simul ac Dnae reverendæ Matri et Matronæ Joannæ Jugan superiori puellarum infirmis utriusque sexûs senio confectis inservientium in parochiâ Sti Servatii, pariterque omnibus et singulis superioribus, et illarum sodalibus nunc et pro tempore existentibus: ad centennium præsentibus valituris.—De Magallon, Proval Reg., fol. 21. Dinantii, Die 29a Augti, 1842. Fr. Felix Massat, Soc. ex Prov.

support and to answer for the future. This event belongs to the sphere of providential coincidences.

They received another favour. Mgr. Brossais Saint Marc, Bishop of Rennes, being in the district, deigned on September 27, in the afternoon, to visit the humble asylum, whose existence he had recently protected.

It was a sweet consolation and a great encouragement to the Servants of the Poor and their old people, for his lordship was much moved, and he exhorted them to continue their good and useful work, which he blessed. This kindly proceeding on the part of the Bishop, and the sympathetic presence of the Rev. de Bonteville, the priest in charge of the parish, removed all doubts from the mind of the public, and from that day many people showed themselves well disposed to the work.

This favourable movement of public opinion was needed, for they were preparing to change their abode, and to receive a greater number of destitute people. At Michaelmas they took possession of the "House of the Cross," and the same day received six other "old women." The work increasing, Madeleine joined Jeanne and Virginie. It was a happy day for her and her companions, and a great help for the poor, as she was good hearted, loved the work, and understood the management of a house. The Sisters renewed the offer of making Françoise Aubert a member of the association; but in her humility she refused, saying that she was too old. All she asked for was a room in the house, and the favour of taking care of the first blind old

woman. This worthy soul was the first benefactress of the "Little Family": her furniture, her linen, her money, all went to the "work" at its small beginning.*

Marie Jamet, who was still kept back by her family, lamented that she was not able to join her companions; but at last her parents gave their consent, and she joined them. About the middle of October, 1842, our four little foundresses thus found themselves united together, and urged on by a common impulse towards the object of their enterprise.

The new house was quickly adapted to its new destination as a hospice. The buildings enclosed around a medium sized court, and there was a fine garden. The bedrooms were put in order, and twenty-five poor women were installed. Jeanne, the Superior, continued to beg for alms; but Marie, who was elected her Counsellor on October 20, often took her place. As for the rule, they added to it as occasion required. Before fixing a point to be observed as a regulation, they studied it thoroughly; the Superior and the Counsellor, and sometimes the two other Sisters, conferred about it with the Director of the little association. When it was clearly seen that for the glory of God some regulation was necessary, they observed it for a few months as an experiment, so that nothing should be put in the rule which could not be practised.

The Servants of the Poor now cut their hair and

* She died January 16, 1850, at the House of Saint-Servan, piously assisted by the Little Sisters.

wore a linen band upon their foreheads. They still kept their peasant's dress, for they had not the means to defray the expense of a total change; but it was said in the regulations: "Their clothing shall be brown or black, or at least these colours shall predominate; the Sisters shall be neither fastidiously nor eccentrically attired; their head-dress shall be a cap or round coif with some additional trimming."

On the 8th of the following December they adopted a leather belt and a crucifix; the latter, however, was not worn outside. All these practices and all these objects were so many symbols of the engagements they had undertaken. In the preceding May, the young women had made a temporary vow of chastity; they renewed it; then the four Sisters of the Poor added to it the vow, also temporary, of obedience, which is the ordinary bond of religious communities. Jeanne and Marie made it on November 21, Virginie and Madeleine on December 8, 1842, for a year. It was now decided to renew, each year, the vows of chastity and obedience on December 8—Feast of the Immaculate Conception—which was chosen as the great festival of the patroness of the association. All these acts were pregnant with hopes for the future; nevertheless, they must not be regarded as vows and engagements of the religious state, inasmuch as the Church had not recognized them, but rather as preparations, as great as circumstances permitted, for that state. Golden legends must not take the precedence of historical facts.

The associates began to receive old men. "One

day," says the memoir at the Academy, "Jeanne learns that a man seventy-two years of age, Rodolphe Lainé, an old sailor without a pension, is abandoned in a damp cellar. She goes there; she perceives a man with haggard face, covered with half-rotten rags, lying upon what had formerly been straw, but was now nothing but a loathsome dunghill. This poor wretch had only a stone for a pillow; his cellar was beneath the house of some poor folks who gave him a few pieces of bread, and for two years he had been living thus. At this sight Jeanne is struck with the keenest compassion; she goes out, confides what she has seen to a beneficent person, and returns immediately after with a shirt and clean clothing. When the old man had changed his things, she transports this new guest to her house."

They were not slow in finding him companions, and the hospice took a new development, with its separate wings for men and women. The memoir mentions that two young girls, the one five and the other fourteen years of age, and two boys of nine and ten were received; several others arrived, so that the establishment began to have something of the appearance of a hospice. At the end of 1843 there were forty destitute people under their care; a year later there were sixty. But we must explain how this happened.

It was necessary to obtain funds in order to feed the indigent poor, for though the labour and the devotion of the Servants of the Poor sufficed to tend them, it was not sufficient to feed and clothe them.

Miss Eliza Dubois, who had already rendered

them great services, now offered to accompany Sister Jeanne on her begging expedition. Her example bore fruit, for seeing this good lady feared neither rebuff nor fatigue in order that she might make the work and its begging sisters known, no one dared to refuse alms. They collected in this way a good store of corn, black wheat, and potatoes; they received as well some thread, tow, and linen, and this begging drew useful visits to the hospice. At Saint-Servan and at Saint-Malo the new hospitallers began to beg for broken victuals, they begged in the markets, and from the ships; and from February, 1843, they had the satisfaction of seeing the workmen in the Guibert dockyards, numbering several hundreds, make a weekly subscription of a penny each, and the men continued this assistance for several years.

They continued their precarious mode of life, and it caused no little surprise in the neighbourhood to see the poor increasing in number and being maintained without the hospice having any fixed income. To the *quête* they joined ingenuity. At Christmas, 1842, the Sisters arranged an apartment as a crib, with landscape and figures. This pious representation attracted many people, and the collection amounted to 600 francs. They now sold things. After having bought some raw wool, the Sisters washed it and bleached it, then the old women carded and spun it, and finally they knitted it into different articles, from which they obtained some profit. Madeleine, generally alone, but sometimes accompanied by a Sister, went into the villages to sell these little articles, adding to them some little

things which they bought wholesale at Rennes and Dinan, and retailed at a profit.

They learned likewise to trust in Providence. A bill for 600 francs became due when they had but 30 francs in hand; but a priest of the neighbourhood came to the hospice, and gave them 400 francs in gold. Several incidents of this kind occurred from time to time, which enabled them to pay their debts, and strengthened the confidence of the charitable associates.

Nevertheless, they were not rich. In winter the Sisters had to be careful with their fires and light, and often watched their sick in darkness, contenting themselves with lighting the candles, when the sick had need of their help. One evening after the poor had had their meal, there was nothing for the Sisters to eat except one halfpenny loaf. They sat down at the table, said the *Benedicite*, and then deliberated who should have this little loaf. Each wanted to give it to her neighbour. In the end, it was divided into four parts, and each ate her mouthful of bread. About eight o'clock, the boy from the priest's house presented himself at the home, bringing the remains of a meal. Our four Sisters, moved by this providential succour, shed tears, and they had eaten their supper.

Meanwhile much good was done. These poor old women, who formerly wandered about the streets with none to care for them, now clean, waited on with tender care, were so many conquests of charity. They had taken for preference the most miserable, notably a poor woman who picked up rags and was

the horror of the town. Her return to a virtuous life was sincere, and caused great rejoicing in the country. Thus the inhabitants appreciated this work and the personal devotion of the courageous maids more and more.

However, the companions of their childhood, seeing them pass in their humble costume, sometimes bent beneath the burden of the alms received, held aloof from these devoted mendicants. Some mocked; others were moved, and though feeling some attraction and admiration, in spite of the repugnance of nature, they nevertheless avoided coming into contact with them. Later, when grace had won the victory and they had followed their example, they related this themselves. Eulalie Jamet, when she met her sister in the way, would say to her: "Go away! Do not speak to me! With your dress and basket you make me feel ashamed." Another young girl asked for grace to become a nun, "but not amongst that sort of Sisters," she added. So the number of the poor increased; the resources and the labour likewise; but recruits were not added to the Servants of the Poor, and this was the trial of the first years.

Jeanne had been re-elected Superior, in spite of her employment, which took her away from home. "Whilst her three Sisters are occupied at home with the most painful tasks," says the official memoir, "Jeanne, outdoors, indefatigable, increases her devotedness in proportion as the number of her poor increases. She is constantly walking out, no matter what weather it may be, carrying a basket, which

she always brings back full. In pleading her cause she is truly eloquent; she has often been seen to shed tears as she pleaded for their needs. It is, therefore, difficult to resist her, and nearly always she succeeds in softening the hardest hearts. Yet she never importunes anyone. If they refuse her, she withdraws at once, without showing the least displeasure, and says: 'Another time perhaps you will help us.'" Such indeed was her real work—that of collector of alms, of being the enlightened pioneer of the home. As she had been enlightened as to the needs of the poor and abandoned aged, so she had received the intelligence of the *quête*, and the genius of charity with which she was endowed, caused her to discover its providential resources.

On the other hand, her long journeys and constant absence from the house, her lack of instruction, even her age and her habits (which did not easily lend themselves to a new religious training), seemed to necessitate a change in the office of Superior. This took place on December 23, 1843. Marie Jamet, who had the gift of governing and great skill in the management of a household, succeeded her. As for Virginie, she became an excellent infirmary nurse. Subduing, little by little, the vivacity of her nature, she dressed wounds with skill and unfailing compassion. She had the light and brave hand of the experienced nurse, together with the word, the look, and a pity which penetrated the heart of the most refractory. Thus were the peculiar aptitudes of each developed to find their fitting employment.

On February 7, 1844, they pronounced the simple

vows of poverty and of hospitality, as they had formerly pronounced the simple vows of chastity and obedience. The outlines of the work were becoming more definite; the promise to exercise hospitality determined their mission. All these vows were temporary and tentative. Thus pledged to the service of God and the poor, and emboldened by the presence of the first postulant, who had just entered, they took amongst themselves names as religious. Marie Jamet took the name of Marie Augustine de la Compassion, Jeanne Jugan that of Marie de la Croix, Virginie Tredaniel chose Marie Thérèse de Jésus, and Madeleine Bourges was known as Marie Joseph. Regarding themselves in their hearts as religious hospitallers, they changed their title of "Servants of the Poor" into "Sisters of the Poor," which they had indeed become.

The vow of hospitality in the ceremony used for profession, as in the use of the black scapular and the leather belt, were suggested by Father Felix Massat, the judicious and faithful counsellor of the hospitaller Order of Saint John of God. History ought to register the influence which this Order exercised over the primitive institution of the hospitaller congregation. Such societies are complex. They are formed neither in a day nor by one person, but are the result of the efforts and aspirations of several, and, above all, of the action of God upon His chosen souls.

In the eyes of the world nothing seemed changed, since these acts were of a private nature and concerned no one but themselves. Within their own

house they conducted themselves as nuns. Meanwhile a remarkable change had come over Eulalie Jamet: while taking the place of one of the Sisters who was ill, and assisting the poor, the religious and penitential character of the work had been manifested to her, and had attracted her with irresistible force. Up till then, in spite of the desire for the religious life, which she had had from her infancy, the association had had no attractions for her. The young girl was then eighteen years of age, and well gifted. She was the first postulant, and her entrance, in January, 1844, seemed to be a first benediction of Heaven upon the association. As she embraced sacrifice with ardour, and imitated the self-devotion of the four Sisters in everything, she was admitted to the clothing on the tenth of the following April. The first taking of the habit was very simple. The leather belt, symbol of chastity, and the band, symbol of obedience, were for the present the only distinctive part of their dress. The young novice received the name of Marie de la Conception.

By this time the house had been paid for. A lottery, which brought 1,500 francs, had completed the amount. It can well be understood that a property containing a courtyard and garden which cost only 20,000 francs could not contain much space for lodging, and that it was indispensable to enlarge the hospitaller establishment. After they had collected a heap of building stone and obtained sand from the garden, they decided to start a subscription, which was successful. They obtained the

cartage of materials for nothing, materials at a low price, and many small sums, enough to lay the foundation and pay first expenses. But how were they to raise the walls and place the woodwork?

There was among the poor old women of the hospice one who had been a fish-wife, but by degrees abandoning her trade she had become a beggar, wandering about the beach, generally drunk. Her relations, who were in easy circumstances, had rescued her, but were unable to save her from her degradation. The Sisters had been more fortunate: they had converted her. This poor woman, accustomed to hear nothing but howls and insults, was won over by the sight of the self-devotion of the Sisters and their gentle ways. One of her nephews, who lived in the island of Jersey, came and saw this conversion. In gratitude for it, a little time after, when on his death-bed, he bequeathed 7,000 francs to the home. With this sum, the walls were raised, but when the woodwork was in position, all resources appeared to be absolutely exhausted—but this was not the case.

Some months earlier the municipal administration and Rev. de Bonteville, the parish priest, had addressed to the Academy the memoir of Jeanne Jugan, from which large extracts have been taken. It ended with this double attestation:

"The Mayor of Saint-Servan, while authenticating the fifteen signatures of the members of the Municipal Council, placed here below, and of the parish priest, certifies that the facts mentioned in

the account are accurate and known to him by personal experience.

"DOUVILLE.

"SAINT-SERVAN,
"*December* 21, 1844."

"The undersigned, a member of the General Council, and acting as sub-prefect of the district of Saint-Malo, has noticed the good works of Miss Jeanne Jugan. The testimony of the honourable persons who have collected it has been unanimous concerning all the facts recorded in the report hereto attached. He therefore most earnestly recommends this virtuous woman to the kindly interest of the members of the Commission established for the distribution of the reward for merit founded by Monsieur de Montyon.

"The Counsellor-General.

"LOUIS BLAISE."

Upon the exposition of these facts and the official references which we have just read, the Commission of the Academy sent a favourable decision. The first Montyon prize, of the value of 3,000 francs, was decreed to the virtuous Breton. The celebrated Dupin, to whom the charge was given of pronouncing the oration on the prize of virtue in 1845, exclaimed: "Gentlemen, the greater number of hospices have been founded by the parishes or by the State. Other establishments of the same kind have been founded by rich men, by testamentary dispositions, by appeals to benevolence, by the help of subscriptions, or even by lotteries wisely organ-

ized. The hospice at Saint-Servan has been founded by a poor servant who had no riches except her charity." Monsieur Dupin ended with a peroration which dwelt in the memory of all: "There remains a problem which no doubt presents itself to the mind of each one of you. How is it possible that Jeanne could provide the expense of such a house? How can I explain it? Providence is great. Jeanne is indefatigable, Jeanne is eloquent, Jeanne has prayer, Jeanne has tears, Jeanne has toil, Jeanne has her basket which she ever brings back full. Saintly woman! The Academy places in that basket the sum of which it can dispose at discretion; it decrees you an award of 3,000 francs."

The press re-echoed this oration, and made the name of Jeanne Jugan celebrated throughout all France. The most advanced papers were in ecstasies over the virtues of this charitable person, in whom they saw among the laity a saint and a rival to the most devoted religious. The matter even went so far that the Society of the Freemasons awarded Jeanne Jugan a gold medal, styling her "an admirable woman." The medal was useful: Jeanne had it melted, and the pure gold, taking a new form, became the chalice which served in the holy mysteries in the little chapel of the asylum. She employed her 3,000 francs to finish the house of the poor.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST FOUNDATIONS (1846)

The saintly man of Tours—The three curates—The foundations at Rennes, Dinan, and Tours—Inside view by an English visitor and by Louis Veuillot.

THE beauty and freshness of the Breton coast attract to it every year, in the summer season, a large number of visitors. Monsieur Dupont, "the saintly man of Tours," came there with his mother and daughter several years in succession. He thus became acquainted with "the little work,"* and encouraged it by his visits and his alms. His visits to Saint-Servan were destined to have very great importance as regards the future of the institution. We have seen that the clergy of the parish were favourable to the home from its beginning, and it should be added that three of the curates—the Revv. Le Pailleur, Diot, and Rogerie—worked in the same spirit. After they had devised amongst themselves a scheme for helping to evangelize certain dioceses of France, a bond of union was established between the Sisters of the Poor and these zealous priests. M. Dupont entered into these views, and placed Bougligny, in the diocese of Meaux, at the disposal of the missioners. Thus the horizon was widened.

* This was the name given to the charitable undertaking in the beginning.

As a consequence, it was resolved in the council of the association to make some efforts to extend the family of the Sisters. At this moment the home counted seventy-five poor persons on its list, and hence it was reasonably concluded that the work had proved its vitality, and could succeed elsewhere if the same system was adopted. The accession of a new postulant with a real vocation strengthened the hopes entertained. Françoise Trévily, who, under the name of Sister Anne Marie, occupies the sixth place in the roll of Sisters, was desirous to devote herself to the service of the poor; but her relatives, who lived at Erquy at some distance along the coast, kept her at home with them. Marie Jamet, the Superior, went to see them. She and Françoise pleaded the rights of God and of charity so effectually that the relatives gave their consent. The new postulant was worthy of her predecessors. On the other hand, the inhabitants of Saint-Servan, flattered by the renown of Jeanne Jugan, who had now become one of the glories of the neighbourhood, were anxious to utilize this fame for their own interest. A wide field of work opened before her. She was to be sent to Rennes, the chief town. The sails were to be spread, for the wind had risen and blew from the right quarter. Advantage was taken of all these circumstances.

Jeanne left for Rennes on January 19, 1846, provided with a certificate from the Mayor of Saint-Servan. She set out in reliance on God, without fear or anxiety, and resolved to do everything in her power to make her double mission successful. She

found a lodging at the house of Miss Morel, who had had business relations with the home. Jeanne Jugan (not yet known as Sister Mary of the Cross) was well received at Rennes; her name was an introduction, and she was readily listened to. Her heart opened when people spoke to her of the poor. With touching words which forced attention, she told of the marvel of Saint-Servan. She suggested that a like establishment would be very useful at Rennes, and the idea met with general acceptance. The Bishop himself received her kindly, and offered her a contribution, remarking playfully that she was going to injure the poor of the town; to which Jeanne, in all simplicity and boldness, replied that she wished for nothing better than to carry nothing away to Saint-Servan and to take care of the poor at Rennes. The conversation, however, went no further. The Prefect received her with respect, and assured her of the goodwill of his staff. She felt that she was obtaining support, and sent the news to Saint-Servan.

The Superior replied: "From the account you give me, it seems that the poor of Rennes are quite left to themselves, and it grieves my heart, as it does yours. No doubt it would be a great happiness for them to have a house like ours. Your desires are excellent, but not easy to accomplish. If nothing were needed but devoted workers, we could offer them; but you must know that a thing of this kind can only be established with the consent of the Prefect, and probably of the Mayor, as well as the co-operation of many other persons; it is not easy to

obtain all this." On receiving still more favourable news, the Superior wrote again: "What! the good God is willing to entrust some more poor people to us? We are not worthy of such a blessed mission. If you have the happiness of gathering in some poor, let us know at once. I will come and see you." Towards the end of February, Marie Jamet arrived at Rennes.

On February 28, 1846, a beginning was made, though on a very small scale. In one room and a tiny chamber adjoining, ten poor women were installed. They were very happy with Miss Marie and Miss Jeanne, as they called them. Having succeeded so far, a house suitable for a home was now sought. None being found, the two Sisters of the Poor turned to Heaven and invoked St. Joseph, "who had found for Jesus and Mary first a stable, and afterwards a house at Nazareth." Now it happened that on March 19, the Superior went to the earliest Mass in the parish church of All Saints (while her companion took care of the old women). As she was making her thanksgiving, a person came up to her and said: "Have you found a house?" "Not yet." "Well, I know of one that will suit you." They went to see the house, which was in a suburb called the Magdalen. It was large enough to lodge from forty to fifty poor people, there was also an apartment suitable for the Sisters, and a small pavilion, which could be made into a chapel. The matter was reported to Saint-Servan. The three curates pledged their purses and went as securities, and the deed, putting the Sisters in possession, was signed on

March 25. On the same day they removed to the new home. Eulalie Jamet, not yet known as Sister Marie of the Conception, was named Superior on May 9, 1846. The civil authorities regarded the establishment favourably, and gave—the Mayor for the town of Rennes and the Prefect for the whole department—written permission to Jeanne Jugan and Françoise Trévily, her companion, to collect money for it. The clergy of the parish of All Saints, particularly the Abbé Gandon, assisted them most devotedly.

Two incidents are still remembered which show that the community was now in want and now in abundance. One day when it was absolutely necessary to do the washing, the supply of wood failed. In this distress the Sisters appealed to the Heavenly Father, who takes care of the birds of the air and the humble flowers of the field. A little later they saw a cartload of wood arrive. The driver said that his master had come to the yard and ordered some wood to be taken to the Home of the Magdalen, and that, after going away, he had come back again and said: "These Sisters are so poor that they will not be able to pay anybody to cut the wood; so take it ready cut." The Sisters blessed God, and set themselves gladly to their washing; and once more their dear old, infirm clients had nothing to suffer.

One evening, the Sister employed in the kitchen came to ask whether she should ring the bell for supper, seeing that she had nothing to serve up for the Sisters. "Have the poor eaten as much as they wanted?" inquired the Superior. "Yes, my good

Mother." "That is right. Anyhow, you must ring the bell in order to obey the rule." The Sisters went to table as usual, recited grace, and sat down, but still there was no food. One began to read as usual, that at least the souls might be nourished. Presently the bell rang, and a Sister went to open the door. There stood a maid-servant with a hot supper ready to place on the table. Her mistress, fearing the Sisters might be without food, had passed the evening in preparing this supper for them. Greatly moved at seeing how God's Providence had provided for their needs, the portress returned and placed the unexpected feast before the Sisters.

At such times the bread of Providence was sweet; it nourished the heart and soul as well as the body. In eating it, the community felt that the Father of Heaven watched over them; for it was really He who inspired these good people in the hour of need; it was He also who tried the fidelity of His servants, and only let them suffer hunger in order to succour them with tender solicitude. It was a trial for their faith, hard at times to suffering nature, but penetrated by a supernatural spirit.

Already negotiations had begun for another foundation. There was a person in business at Dinan who had had business relations with the home. Her name was Follen. Having visited the house at Saint-Servan, she had been struck by the good it was doing there, and with an intelligence of the things of God which does not depend on intellectual culture, she determined to have a similar house at Dinan. She spoke about it to the Mayor and the

Vicars of the town, who took up the matter, and Abbé Brajeul, the priest in charge of the parish, was fortunate enough to obtain the consent of the Bishop of Saint-Brieuc.

The town had preserved its girdle of fortifications, with its flanking towers. One of these towers, situated at the entrance of the city, had long served as a prison: the heavy doors with huge bolts, all on the outside of the doors, were still to be seen. The Mayor kindly placed it at the disposal of the newcomers; and it was there that, on August 4, 1846, the Sisters of the Poor installed themselves—prisoners of charity. Let us enter this prison in spirit, accompanied by an English visitor, who has described his visit and whose account is well worth repeating.

"On August 22, 1846, three weeks after the arrival of Jeanne Jugan in the old tower near the gate of Brest, which served her as a lodging, I had the good fortune to see her there with her companions and five or six poor old women whom she had already gathered together. A narrow, winding staircase, inconvenient to go up, led to the apartment which they occupied. The ceiling was low, the walls bare and rough, the windows small and barred, so that one might have supposed one's self to be in a cave or prison; but the sad aspect was brightened, to some extent, by the sparkling fire on the hearth and the contented faces of the occupants. Some beds were arranged in a recess of the brick-paved apartment. One or two old chairs or stools, a little table, and some utensils, made up the furniture. Jeanne welcomed us kindly; she willingly showed us her

own apartment and another rather better room where the women worked, and replied with a good grace to all our questions. She wore a plain but neat black dress, a white cap and neckerchief—the costume adopted by the community. Her age appeared to be about fifty. She is of middle height and dark complexion. She looks worn, but her countenance is placid and kind: without the least sign of pretension or self-love.

"I asked her with what funds she started. She answered that she had a little more than 400 francs and some furniture. She did not know any single day where to obtain provisions for the next, but she persevered, with a firm conviction that God would never abandon the poor, and she acted upon this sure principle that all one does for them is done for our Lord Jesus Christ. I asked her how she could distinguish the deserving poor from the undeserving. She replied that she received those who asked her assistance and who appeared the most destitute; that she began with those who were old and infirm, as being the most in need, and that she made inquiries of their neighbours about their characters, their resources, etc. To prevent those who were still capable of working from being idle, she made them fray out old pieces of cloth, and then card and spin the wool which they had obtained; they thus earned three farthings a day. If she found some other work suited to their strength, she procured it for them, and allowed a third of what they gained by it for their personal use.

"As she never allows her poor to go out without

permission, nor to beg for their personal profit, she thinks that her system tends to prevent laziness and mendicity. Jeanne and her companions solicit alms in the neighbourhood to support them, and she says that she finds plenty of people disposed to give. She asks the baker for the broken or stale bread; the milkman gives her skimmed milk; the butcher the meat which, though still good, will not keep much longer; and when the fish is plentiful, she receives some from the fishwives. At the market-place they keep for her the vegetables and fruit that are partly spoiled and no longer presentable for sale. In this way she collects from the tradespeople what each can most easily do without. From others she obtains broken victuals, worn-out clothes, money, or old furniture, etc., so that she is able to support her poor comfortably.

"There is, in this woman, something so calm and so saintly that when I saw her I thought I was in the presence of a superior being, and her words so touched my heart that my eyes—I do not know why —were filled with tears."

This testimony is an important contribution to the history of the Little Sisters.

The old prison became soon too small for their purpose, but they discovered a dilapidated convent, which they obtained for 23,000 francs, to be paid by instalments. During the delay previous to taking possession, Virginie Trédaniel, who was named Superior, installed herself with her family of poor in a house in the suburb. The principal resource of the humble home was the large establishment

for lunatics, kept by the Brothers of St. John of God. The Sisters found there a regular supply of broken food.

With the three homes at St. Servan, Rennes, and Dinan the "little work" had a base of operation. It counted half a score of subjects ready for any sacrifice, and saw other vocations budding; it had zealous friends in the centre of France who desired to have like homes in their own country. What more was needed? With full assurance, Marie Jamet, the Superior, taking a novice and a postulant with her, set out for Tours. Thus the charitable association made its exodus from Brittany, and Monsieur Dupont, who had paid for the journey and prepared the way, received them at his house on December 31, 1846. The three Breton women succeeded in renting a house in the parish of La Riche, and they found in the Abbé Alleron, the parish priest, a director who helped them to observe the spirit of their rules.

On the evening of the Epiphany the three Sisters of the Poor sat down to table with the Dupont family; but they were sad because no poor had yet come, and a home cannot be started without old people. Presently a person appeared, and said: "We have got one poor woman, and have taken her to your house in La Riche, where she is waiting for you." At this news their faces brightened up; the Sisters rose and hurried to the home; Monsieur Dupont followed them. They found a poor old decrepit woman in the corridor. She was enraptured by the hearty welcome of the Sisters, who at once

occupied themselves in making her at home. This was not difficult, for the supper had been sent after them, and there were three beds ready, given by Monsieur Dupont—one in his own name, one in the name of his mother, and another in that of his daughter. The three beds were not long unoccupied, for other poor people soon came.

One can easily imagine how difficult all these foundations must have been, and how scarce provisions were on certain days. We must add that at Tours the Mayor and the Archbishop restricted themselves to not hindering the new foundation, consequently the poor Sisters worked at their own risk and peril, without authorization of any kind to accredit them to the public. In short, the work had to bear testimony to itself and show what it could do.

Meanwhile, the foundation at Tours was marked by a circumstance incapable of a merely natural explanation. At first the Sisters had only a soup-kettle for the soup. This soon became insufficient, and they were obliged to add two saucepans. One day, when the Sister in charge of the kitchen had placed all her saucepans on the fireplace, the Mother Superior came in, and said: "Why all these saucepans, Sister? The soup-kettle is enough; don't use the saucepans any more." "But, Mother, we want those to make up the portions." "Be content with the soup-kettle." The Sister obeyed, and, to her great astonishment, it yielded enough for everybody. It even happened that, though they received six women in addition, the marvellous kettle still

sufficed for them. "It appears that God has enlarged it," wrote the Superior. "The portions, too, are better, and everyone has enough. This has greatly struck our Sisters, and we often speak of the little soup-kettle."

Monsieur Dupont wrote to his friends: "Our dear little Sisters of the Poor, those noble competitors of Jeanne Jugan, have arrived. They have the sympathies of everybody. They are not satisfied with the vow of poverty: they have bravely made the vow of penury, asking for the leavings of the rich. They give it to the old people who have confided themselves to their maternal care, and it is only when these have been fed that they provide for themselves. Would it be possible that God should leave them to hunger? On all sides, the people here welcome them with marvellous respect. This work of the Sisters is destined to be spread everywhere."

What was not less surprising was to see the poor trust themselves to their care. On the evening of the Epiphany, the poor woman whom they had received first had gone to sleep contented, but on waking in the morning she was less cheerful. Opening her eyes, she saw around her only white walls, and a room without any furniture. Anxiety seized her, and she began to cry out: "Where am I?" This was truly the question of the poor: "How will they support us?" . . . It was necessary to inspire the old people themselves with the bold and absolute confidence of the Sisters who were content to live from hand to mouth, and to see the family of their poor constantly increasing. At the end of a few

weeks, the poor woman knew that she was in a good home, and the old people gradually understood how they were supported. Then two or three new Sisters came to increase the number of the staff, and to assist in the undertaking.

Louis Veuillot, in an admirable passage, has related his visit to the new foundation: "The house contained, at that time, four old men and twenty-six poor women, from seventy to eighty years old. Every sort of misery, both physical and mental, was brought together there. But they are no longer there; they have not been able to cross the threshold where hope and peace wait upon those whom no one loves, and who have no longer peace or hope. I have seen clean clothes, cheerful faces, and even splendid health. Between these young Sisters and the old people, there is an interchange of affection and respect which rejoices the heart.

"However, the new-comers are not always gentle. The Sisters have been struck more than once. One man was rough and uncivil. 'He is full of intellectual pride,' a Sister said cheerfully; 'he has read much, and still rather despises those who believe in God and who pray. Within a month you will not recognize him; he will have gone to confession.'

"There was only one sick person in the infirmary: a good old woman was dying there with peace on her countenance, and the crucifix in her hands. She had received the last sacraments that morning. We asked her how she felt. 'Happy,' she replied. 'God will soon give me a place in His Paradise.' She begged us to pray for her. She was so calm, so

sweet and venerable, that our heart constrained us to kneel down and implore the grace for a death like hers. 'Behold the first conquest we have made here,' said Madame Marie Augustine. 'When we first came her children had just driven her out, for although they were workmen gaining their living, they would not support her. She could not forgive this cruelty, and all her talk was nothing but curses and blasphemy. She now dies praying for them and heartily bestowing on them her blessing, which they refuse to accept.'

"In the kitchen I saw a heap of all sorts of broken food, gathered in the morning from some fifty houses. The Sisters warm up and make savoury dishes out of it, so that all are well nourished. They restrict themselves entirely to the diet of their poor; no distinction is made, except that the Sisters serve and the poor are served. This harvest of charity is reaped twice a day. Everything comes at the moment of need; at supper nothing is left, at breakfast nothing is wanting. Charity has given the house; when a boarder comes, charity sends the bed and the clothing."

This view of the interior of a home in 1847 is well worth recalling. The famous Christian apologist, Louis Veuillot, refuted the arguments of the free-thinkers by appealing to the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Although they had never read the Socialists' or the Economists' doctrines of any school, they had, nevertheless, discovered a science. "Have they not solved the problem how to assist the poor man without disgust to themselves, without humilia-

tion for him, without expense to the State, and without imposing on the public anything, except the pleasure of giving?" What, then, is this science which works such wonders? "Simply the science of Jesus crucified."

CHAPTER IV

PROGRESS AND DIFFICULTIES OF ORGANIZATION

The habit and the vows—The ecclesiastical position of the "Little Work" at Rennes, at Saint-Brieuc, and at Tours—Essays in organization at Saint-Servan and at Tours.

At this time the Sisters of the Poor had a costume—viz., a cloak which secured them a certain uniformity of dress and distinguished them a little from the people. When they went to Rennes, they took mantles with them, such as are generally worn by widows in Saint-Servan, and they wore them out of doors. The ample garment served a double purpose: on the one hand, it gave a more dignified appearance to the wearer, and, on the other, it covered the gifts of charity which she had to carry. At Rennes, the hood fell back on the shoulders; at Tours, the Sisters put it over their heads, like the peasants of that town; and as that was found convenient, this custom was finally adopted by the "Little Family."* Naturally the public gave them the name of Sisters, and little by little, the name in religion took the place of surnames.

This habit of addressing them as "Sister" raised a question which was important from an ecclesiastical point of view: Were they religious, or were they

* This name supplanted that of the "Little Work," and replaced it by degrees as the association grew in numbers and importance. The title of congregation is of later date—1852.

not? The fact is, that in establishing themselves at Rennes they had organized their charities and arranged matters independently of episcopal authority. At that time, they had no idea of soliciting the Church to take the home under her protection. Hence, their position was very delicate, and this became more felt as the homes developed. Mgr. Brossais Saint Marc always recognized the personal devotedness of the Sisters and the good done to the poor; but other considerations were in question: the religious title, the value of the vows, the approbation of the rule, the nomination of the authorities. He made this understood in an interview with the Mother Superior, which took place in October, 1846, and in the verbal decision which he gave to the parish priests and confessors, whom he told to consider them as "good women," not as religious. Consequently, the Sisters were somewhat perplexed at the time of the renewal of their annual vows. They referred the matter to their associates at Bougligny, who in reply explained the distinction between the two kinds of vows: such vows as are made in religious congregations approved by the Church, and private vows, which everyone is at liberty to make. They told the Sisters that their vows had not the first character, and that they could not yet put forward any pretension to it, but that they might freely renew their private vows.

The next year the same question was raised in the neighbouring diocese, in connection with the house at Dinan. The Bishop of Saint-Brieuc, in a friendly spirit, appointed in 1847 an Ecclesiastical Commission to examine the rule of the Sisters of the Poor.

The Commission, favourable on the whole, issued its conclusion conformably to canon law—namely, that the Sisters should ask the approval of the Bishop of the place where the mother-house was established. But where should the mother-house be placed, and when? All this was precisely in question and far from being decided; it was therefore necessary to let events take their course, and to wait for Providential indications.

As to Tours, the situation improved rapidly; the Archbishop, although very reserved at the beginning, was attracted to the work, as it developed under his eyes. He even encouraged the Sisters of the Poor to purchase a convent in the town which the Sisters of the Presentation had quitted for another, situated the other side of the Loire. This purchase was effected on February 27, 1848, chiefly by means of a sum of 15,000 francs, given by Monsieur Dupont out of the dowry of his daughter, who had just died, and a sum of 20,000 francs, contributed by a postulant. Mgr. Morlot gave it to be understood that he would willingly see the mother-house and the novitiate established there.

Some measures, recently taken, rendered this combination possible and advantageous. At first, the beginning of a novitiate was formed at Saint-Servan, under the direction of the Superior, and with the help of Sister Pauline, who had been well instructed by the religious of the Adoration. They adopted the method of training the postulants for a few weeks in the practice of prayer, in the observance of the rule and of community life; then they became novices,

and continued their novitiate whilst employed in the service of the poor, in one of the houses. As occasion served, one of the three associate priests freed himself from other engagements, and, after the candidates had made the preparatory retreat, he performed the ceremony of clothing or profession in the name of the association. At the beginning of 1848, the work counted nine Sisters, nine novices, and several postulants. Some other subjects had failed to persevere, or had not been found fit for the work.

An important measure was now decided on, after some deliberation. The work, in removing from its original locality, displayed its true nature, like the plant, which springs up from the soil, develops, takes its shape, and produces branches according to its kind. It was essentially a work concerned with old people, especially including those who were infirm. At that time the establishment was named "House of Refuge for the Aged and Infirm." Consequently the experiment made with some children, in the "House of the Cross" at Saint-Servan, was formally abandoned, experience having shown that work for old people and for children are two kinds of devotedness which require different treatment. The limits of the hospitaller charity are henceforth defined, and it is with these limits that the work will henceforth move and concentrate all its power of action.

On the other hand, the existence of several houses necessitated a regular distribution of authority and occupations—that is to say, the beginning of a hierarchical organization. On December 12, 1847, the Superiors of the four establishments met at Saint-

Servan, which was used as the mother-house, for the elections. Sister Augustine was maintained in charge as Superior-General, and Sister Marie Thérèse was named Mother-Assistant. This meeting has, by some, been considered the first Chapter of the Congregation. In reality, it provided for the charge and work of the four houses, defined the power of the local Superiors, and fixed the connection of the Sisters and houses with the higher Superiors. Thus, though all their proceedings were in the private order, the association was acting in a religious manner like a newly-founded congregation. Henceforth, regarding the work from a religious point of view, which was less apparent at the beginning, and leaving on one side the charitable works, which had at first attracted attention, it became customary to trace the origin of the religious foundation of the Little Sisters to the regulations and exercises of the "Little Rock," and this inversion of events has somewhat misrepresented the true state of affairs, just as a legend mingles with and confuses history.

Hence the centre of the institution was established at Tours in 1848, in a convent, with a view of forming there the commencement of a mother-house and the novitiate. The house was composed in 1849 of about fifty poor and fifteen subjects in the novitiate. The Rev. Le Pailleur devoted himself to this humble ministry, after the giving up of the work in Bougligny, and continued to assist the "Little Work" as he had done at Saint-Servan.

So far the "Home for the Aged and Infirm" of Tours was not very flourishing. The reason was

that both civil and ecclesiastical official authorization for collecting alms had hitherto been refused. The great step was taken: Jeanne Jugan was sent for. Monsieur Dupont wrote joyously on February 12, 1849: "For the last two days, we have been honoured by having with us the mother of all these Little Sisters. What admirable trust in God! What love for His Holy Name! She is going to do us good at Tours. The coarse men of the world think that this 'poor beggar of bread,' as she calls herself, asks alms from them; but if their eyes were to open, they would understand that they themselves receive an immense alms in hearing the Providence of God spoken of with such love and simplicity." All administrative opposition fell before the chartered alms-gatherer. The Archbishop, the Prefect, and the Mayor gave excellent written authorizations, and the institution was formally recognized.

An author has inquired to what extent the venerable Monsieur Dupont, universally known for his devotion to the Holy Face of our Lord, took part in the establishment of "the Little Family." Undoubtedly his influence was great, his counsels highly appreciated; they venerated him as a saint. His historian speaks thus: "It is enough to say that this servant of God had indirectly a great share in the definitive organization and in the fundamental constitutions of this admirable institution."

CHAPTER V

NEW FOUNDATIONS (1849-1851)

The Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul—The Little Sisters of the Poor—Foundations in Nantes, Paris, Besançon, Angers — The first mourning — The devil's castle — Foundations in Bordeaux, Rouen, Nancy—Second house in Paris—Attempts at organization in the capital.

At Tours, the Sisters found themselves in contact with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, and excellent relations were immediately established with it. Hector d'Outremont,* one of the members of the Conference at Tours, wrote to Monsieur Feburier, President of the Conference of Saint-Germain-des-Près in Paris: "I do not know if you have heard of a work which is beginning to spread, and which they speak of here by the name of 'Home of the Poor Women.' Until now, the old people have found no refuge except in hospitals, where unfortunately the authorities do not occupy themselves enough about the care of souls, and, having only a fixed number of places to give, often leave their doors closed against the wretched. Christian charity, properly so called, had not yet specially occupied itself with the latter part of life, of which you realize the importance for eternity. To gather together poor old men and women in one house, to feed, lodge, and warm them—in a word, to provide for them every temporal help, and, above

* Died Bishop of Mans.

all, every spiritual help of which they have need—here, in short, is an account of the whole work." The Society of St. Vincent of Paul, regarding the "Little Work" as a kindred work of charity, introduced it in Nantes and Paris in 1849.

At Nantes, the members of the Conference had sheltered some old women, but the attempt was in danger of failure, for want of organization and nurses. Thus they were led, in February, 1849, to ask for information, and afterwards they invited the Sisters to establish "a house of refuge for the aged and infirm in their town"; and in order to help the foundation, they promised an allowance of forty-five francs a year for every poor person whom the members should place there. On Good Friday, April 6, 1849, Mother Marie Thérèse and her companions opened the home, having neither mattresses, blankets, beds, nor chairs, with only three francs in their purse, and a rent of 800 francs to pay. Almost immediately they received fourteen poor people, eight of whom were sent by the Society of St. Vincent. The first weeks were very trying; the Sisters were treated as adventuresses, because the neighbours really understood nothing of such an enterprise; but afterwards there was a sudden change of feeling, which began in the market-place, reached the suburbs and town, and brought about lasting results.

An additional Sister arrived, who ardently desired to devote herself to the poor. She obtained the favour of being allowed to go and beg in the market-place, which no one had yet dared to do. She goes forward, begs for the poor, and talks with

the tradeswomen, who become enthusiastic and say to her: "Yes, Sister, we will give you something; it is a beautiful work you are doing, and when we are old, we shall have great need of your house." The Sister receives three big sacks of vegetables. She then takes one of the sacks and puts it on her shoulders to carry it away. The tradeswomen are moved again at this sight, and stop her, crying out: "No, no! you shall not carry it; that is too much!" And, looking at one another, they said to themselves: "What will become of us, who do nothing for God?" They paid a man to carry the sack, and invited the Sister of the Poor to come again on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Very soon there were sixty old men and infirm people in the home; and, what is more remarkable, ten young girls of the neighbourhood, won by the Sister's self-sacrificing spirit, entered the novitiate.

It was at Nantes that the popular name of "Little Sisters of the Poor" became complete in all its Christian sweetness and humility. Until then they called themselves "Sisters of the Poor"; at Nantes people got to call them the "Little Sisters." Popular penetration had found the right word—that which expressed the essence of the thing. The name appeared appropriate, and the association adopted it.

While these events were passing at Nantes, the Superior-General and her companion arrived in Paris, March 28, 1849, believing that a "House of Refuge for the Aged" situated in the capital, would be a considerable recommendation in the eyes of the

public. Their undertaking was discussed at the general meeting of the Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul. Ought it to be absorbed in the existing works of assistance, or should the "Little Work" retain its autonomy and its own mode of action? The good Mother-General, speaking with that practical intelligence which characterized her, obtained a decision that they should begin, in Paris as elsewhere, in a small way and in a hired house. The two Sisters, whom these gentlemen had established in a place of refuge called Nazareth, began to seek for a house and to make calls in view of receiving alms. They managed with great care the little money they received, and used for their own maintenance the tickets for bread and meat that they received from the public soup-kitchens. After two months of fruitless search, Sister Marie Louise remained alone in Paris, and continued the search for another two months, but in vain; no one would let a house to these indigent Sisters. Then Monsieur Tulasne, the Doctor of the Nazareth Refuge, went himself to look for one, and on his own security hired, in the Rue Saint-Jacques, a house large enough for a Home. The Little Sisters of the Poor took possession of it on August 1, 1844, with their old people.

Already a new foundation was in course of preparation at Besançon. In the month of May, 1849, Mademoiselle Junot, daughter of Napoleon's celebrated General, wrote thus: "We have already taken some steps to place our work for orphan girls in the hands of religious, in order to establish it on a more

solid base. Until now, Providence has not seemed to favour our endeavour, and we have had to await with patience its movements. The work of Jeanne Jugan, brought to our knowledge quite simply through some articles which I have read in the *Univers Catholique*, pleased me so much by the simplicity and providential character of its establishment and growth, etc., that by God's permission the thought came to me to make a proposition to the Mother-General." Such was the origin of the House of Besançon, for the previous establishment modified its destination and became "The House of Refuge for the Aged and Infirm." The charitable lady gave the greater part of her residence, the chapel, and enough household requisites to begin with. No foundation had begun with so much prosperity. Sister Jeanne Marie, who was endowed with a good judgement and was one of the pillars of the work, was named Superior. She had two novices to help her to conduct the foundation; but they counted upon vocations from the neighbourhood, nor were they mistaken. The Mayor approved cordially of the new work, Mgr. Mathieu blessed it and gave his offering, while the Préfect, considering that such an organization was not within his financial sphere, confined himself to granting his permission.

The institution was now in its tenth year. It had begun in 1839, with the reception of one poor woman in the modest home of two old servants; in 1849 we find a home at St. Solidor containing twelve aged poor. It was still a humble work in appearance, but in reality it was the

primitive cell of the whole organism; it was a new system of hospitality; it was charity making herself no longer merely a servant, but a mendicant for the poor. Now the work had been proved, for it had founded eight homes for the aged. The year 1850 accelerated the movement, and witnessed the birth of four establishments—at Angers, Bordeaux, Rouen, and Nancy.

Again we find Sister Mary of the Cross at the foundation of Angers, where she inaugurated the begging. As everywhere else, she obtained the authorization of the municipality without difficulty, and made known the work, which the public persisted in developing with her to such an extent that in Anjou, as in Brittany, the Little Sisters of the Poor were called "Les Jeanne Jugans." But her strength failed her, and she fell back into obscurity whilst the swarm of young Sisters were taking their flight in all directions to reproduce without her, the marvel of Saint-Servan. With a stroke of the pen, a chronicler wrote these expressive phrases one day in an article: "The mission, sometimes so laborious and always so disinterested, of the Little Sisters of the Poor appears to me very touching. It is one of the most exquisite forms of charity and devotedness. It is their own invention; it could only have been invented by women. What I find particularly original about the Little Sisters of the Poor is that, in order to help the needy and the feeble, they have found nothing better than to adopt the methods of the poor and to beg for them."

We find in an old letter an account of one of these wonderful collections of Sister Mary of the Cross: "In the early days of the institute she came to beg at Redon, and asked permission to solicit alms among our pupils.* I went to see her in the parlour, and she electrified me. Then, impelled by some inspiration, I said to her: 'Sister, follow me'; and without any more ceremony I introduced her into the study of our older boarders, about a hundred of them being there. All the astonished scholars rose, and I said: 'The Sister is going to tell you the object of her presence amongst you.' Then Jeanne Jugan explained the object of her mission plainly and simply. Amazed and deeply touched, all these students absolutely emptied their pockets and desks, and generously gave everything down to their last penny, not without considerable benefit to the purse of the Sister. In proportion it was the same with the students in the other division. The pupils of that time have never forgotten this visit of charity, and all our professors were astonished and touched."

This foundation at Angers was set up in an ancient chapel, placed at the disposal of the Little Sisters by Monsieur Maupoint, at that time vicar-general at Rennes and a friend of the work. The Mother-Superior was Sister Félicité, the young girl of Saint-Servan who had formerly asked for the grace to be a religious, "but not with these Sisters"; she had another grace, that of dying when the foundation was in full operation, on the battlefield of charity,

* College conducted then by the Eudist Fathers.

being the first victim of devotedness in the hospitaller congregation (November 20, 1855).

On May 22, 1850, two Little Sisters of the Poor at the request of Monsieur Germanville, arrived at Bordeaux with a capital of ten francs. After having for three weeks sought in vain for a house, they wandered to the extremity of the town and sat down tired by the wayside; a servant approached them to have a chat, and, having learned how things stood, pointed out in the neighbourhood a large deserted house, which was said to be haunted, and was called "the devil's castle." Fearing neither the name nor the story, the two Sisters visited it, and with the assistance of some friends hired it for 1,100 francs a year. They went into it with their little belongings, and chose a room in which to pass the first night. Towards ten o'clock a dreadful uproar was heard, like a quick continuous knocking, and a bluish flame appeared in the space between the beds; at the same time a mournful cry was heard. The Sisters were very much frightened and could not sleep. The following night they occupied a room leading into the corridor, and left the door open; at the same hour the noise began again, and they saw a strong light through the opening of the door. Some other Sisters having arrived a few days later, nothing was said to them about it; they too heard the noise, and it lasted, as usual, from ten o'clock in the evening till two o'clock in the morning. These nightly noises went on persistently for three months; they suddenly ceased on the day when the Blessed Sacrament was first reserved in the humble chapel.

After six months, the Sisters had twenty-five poor people; the work pleased everybody, and the collections were fruitful. It was at Bordeaux that the Little Sisters began the practice of using a donkey, for the collection of gifts in kind and for carrying the provisions.

While the Little Sisters were establishing the splendid foundation in Bordeaux, two of the begging Sisters, driven by necessity, went into Normandy, and arrived at Rouen in the month of August, 1850. Several persons of influence at once consulted together and declared that the Little Sisters of the Poor should not leave the town, and that they ought to establish their work there. At this news, the Mother-General promptly arrived and saw the Archbishop, who laid before her the difficulties of the enterprise, but without making any opposition to it, and added: "I wish you may do good; I look upon you as pious women, and later on, if you merit it, I will count you among the number of my communities." Strengthened by these words and the co-operation of their friends, the Little Sisters took four poor persons into the small house which had been given them as a lodging; but on September 18 they entered into possession of a more spacious house, hired by their benefactors for 4,000 francs.

The Sisters, including the good Mother Stéphanie, nineteen years of age, were all postulants. To found an establishment with postulants was to confound the world; but God willed that the glory of founding homes for the aged should redound entirely to Him, and not to such feeble instruments. Let us

listen to the story of the first gathering of alms in the market of Rouen: "It is impossible to tell how we were welcomed by these good tradeswomen, so kindhearted and generous. The crowd surrounding us was so large that in order to speak or see it was necessary to mount on chairs, and people had to cut a way through the crowd to come and deposit their offerings. There was a general cry in the market-place: 'They are good Sisters who beg for the poor old people; let us give to them, because when we are old and no longer able to walk, they will do as much for us.' The keepers of the neighbouring shops, afraid of this crowd of people, wanted to know what was going on, and they also brought their offerings—linen, clothing, meat, and money. Our donkey—for they had given us one—had two heavy loads, and these good people told us to return every week." The enthusiasm passed beyond the limits of the market-place. "Everyone wants to help us to set up the home. The workmen of a spinning-mill, kept by Monsieur Le Picard, give one penny a week each for the old people; the workmen at the dye shop of Monsieur Bulard do the same. It is touching to see these kind workmen come in a body to bring wood, bread, or the price of a bed for the poor who have none." So wrote the young Mother-Superior, desirous of making the mother-house a partaker of her joy.

The little work was no longer altogether unknown; from different directions, friends were approaching begging for foundations in their own neighbourhood. Monsieur de Lambel asked for the foundation at

Nancy, which was begun on October 5, 1850, by Mother Marie Thérèse and two sisters. All three left a house which they loved, and poor whom they themselves had drawn out of misery. "They went, happy Little Sisters of the Poor, to run after fresh sacrifices and humiliations, but also after fresh victims of misfortune and other souls redeemed at the price of the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ." The Bishop came to pay them a visit and to express his satisfaction at their coming to Nancy.

The second house in Paris had a somewhat uncommon origin. The National Guard, in making their rounds to watch over the safety of the capital under the "Second Republic," met the Little Sisters of the Poor and the old people in the streets. The sight touched these good citizens, and agreeing amongst themselves that this way of acting was true communism, they determined to found a house of this kind for their old people, every company reserving two beds, and contributing yearly a small allowance. Monsieur Quettant, officer of the National Guard, made the request in union with Monsieur Cochin, who at the same time wished to make use of the home for the benefit of the aged poor in the district he administered. Mother Celestine was named Superior; and a house, hired in the Rue du Regard for 7,000 francs a year, was opened on March 19, 1851.

Not only was the number of homes increasing, but the number of Sisters, Novices, and Postulants had happily made the same progress, and at the end of the year 1850 exceeded a hundred. It was

a result full of promise. The period of difficulties, however, was not at an end, for the hopes originally founded on the establishment at Tours had been premature and were not fulfilled. On December 29, 1850, the second chapter had been held there, the nominations made, and the principal officers of the house elected. The Archbishop had even honoured the heads of the association with a visit, and had promised to take steps as regards the approval of the rule and of the newly-founded congregation. Meanwhile, they could not make up their minds to accept the position of a diocesan congregation; for it seemed obvious to the established Superiors in the other dioceses, that the hospitaller institution ought to have the character of a universal work, so as to pursue its providential development and its complete organization. Affairs were still a little confused; but they directed their thoughts to this object forced by circumstances.

The consequence was that they turned to Paris—a more central point for personal relations, resources, and correspondence—and that at the beginning of 1851. The novices were sent to the house in the Rue Saint-Jacques, while the postulants still remained at Tours. Somewhat later, when the house in the Rue du Regard was established, the novitiate was transported there. This establishment, under the direction of Mother Marie Thérèse, assisted by Sister Eléonore, lasted a little more than a year in difficult circumstances, which one of the Sisters has thus related:

"All the while that the novitiate remained in the

house, we were obliged to hide the postulants, so that no one should know they were there. We were in very small lodgings and in great poverty. The oratory served us for dormitory and workroom. As we had not enough iron bedsteads for all the Sisters, we heaped up the mattresses one on another during the day, and every evening we placed them on the ground in the small passages wherever we could find a corner to put one in. A small room on the ground floor served as a refectory."

The novitiate was still in its infancy; the postulants had to pass there a few months, and after this term of probation and discipline they received the habit. Afterwards they were sent out to work in the foundations, in order to complete the time of the novitiate and to be put to the test before they were professed. One day Father de Ponlevoy, Superior of the Jesuits in Paris, entered the refectory just as the table was being laid; he noticed that instead of glasses the Sisters used cups, mustard and jam-jars of all colours and sizes, and that many other requisites were missing. He was greatly touched by this poverty, and some hours later a crockery-dealer brought several dozens of glasses and cups as a gift from the Father.

The establishment attempted in Paris was only a new halting-place. It was not possible to organize there the constantly increasing novitiate; which it was found necessary in 1851 to divide between the houses in Brittany, Tours, and Paris. The wandering family knew not where to fix its tent. This was God's hour, and Providence intervened.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONGREGATION

The rule of Saint Augustine and the constitutions—An article by Charles Dickens—The Foundations at Laval, Lyons, Lille, Marseilles—A circular of Mgr. de Mazenod—The episcopal authorization—The house of Saint Joseph at Rennes.

THE house at Rennes had assumed a certain importance. It had passed through a period of trial, but several priests and missionaries of the Immaculate Conception, very devoted friends, had brought about between the diocesan authority and the association a conciliation desirable in every respect. These acts of devotedness in the early days must not be passed unnoticed. Mgr. Saint Marc was, in virtue of his position itself, the protector of this little family; he gave himself to it unreservedly, and recalled it into its original home. This was the most desirable and natural solution. He resolved, at the same time, to recall the director of the little work and to entrust it to him officially; he then went further and authorized the new congregation and its constitutions. As a preliminary step, the Rev. Le Pailleur and Father Felix Massat spent three weeks in April, 1851, at the establishment of the Brothers of Saint John of God near Lille, in revising the rule attentively. The Sisters were delighted to hear that this

worthy religious had succeeded in finding the actual rule of Saint Augustine.

It was, in fact, on the rule of Saint Augustine as on a tried foundation that the religious family and its legislation were constituted. The regulations of the "Servants," afterwards the "Sisters of the Poor," were headed by the inscription: "Some poor women, who united to take care of, to clothe, to console the poor . . . at first proposed to follow the admirable rule of Saint Augustine; subsequently, by the help of God, they proposed to observe the following regulations, with the aid of Mary Immaculate, whom they have chosen for their Mother; of Saint Augustine, whom they have chosen for their Father; of Saint Joseph, whom they have taken for their special Protector." The new Sisters had found, in the rule of the holy patriarch, an organization of community life suitable to their work, a bond of unity, authorized practices of poverty, modesty, and religious obedience, and a form of life eminently appropriate to works of Christian charity. On this foundation they based their special rules, and after a period of trial, they succeeded, as far as its main outlines are concerned, in establishing it as it now works.

They rose in the morning at half-past four, and went to bed at nine. They slept in a common dormitory in alcoves, each bed being enclosed by curtains. They slept on straw in imitation of the poverty of our Saviour in Bethlehem. They observed strict silence during the hours of repose from evening to morning. As hospitaller Sisters, they already

divided their day into two parts, of which one was consecrated to religious exercises and the other to works of charity. The religious exercises were performed in the morning and evening, when the old, sick, and infirm were resting; the work of charity was in full operation from breakfast-time until after the supper of the old people.

After breakfast, whilst the begging Sisters were out collecting, the other Sisters busied themselves in the rooms, infirmaries, and dormitories, according to their respective duties. They kept the house clean and in order, and did all the household work and provided for the needs of the poor people. Then, as now, it was necessary to dress the wounds and nurse the sick, to help the invalids to rise, to dress them, and to conduct them to the sitting-room. In the evening they rendered them similar services. At morning, midday, and evening meals, the Sisters distributed the food to the old people, they themselves fed those whose sight was weak, whose hands trembled, whose strength failed, or who were in second childhood. In the actual exercise of charity, the Little Sister finds that joy which befits her vocation, and her gentle gaiety spreads amongst the poor people and dissipates their sadness.

Prayer, the recitation of the office, and other exercises of the community had their special hours allotted, but no duty to the poor was allowed to suffer on account of them; for the souls united to God are full of faith and the spirit of sacrifice without ceasing to be practical. Devotedness springs from the heart, and it is true virtue which must be

cultivated in the human soul in order to bring forth the works of fraternal charity. Moreover, the spirit of recollection of the Little Sisters is not repelling; it is penetrated by charity, like all her conduct, to serve the poor is to serve God, and this is an exercise of the virtue of religion.

All these regulations, and several others, were determined at the time of which we are speaking. It might even be said that they go back to the foundation, so directly do they spring out of the nature of things and respond to the necessities of the vocation. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the material organization, often very incomplete, of small communities, and the difficulties inseparable from a period of formation, sometimes modified a little this regularity. The spirit of these early days is shown by the following prayer. Raising their hands to Mary, the first Little Sisters used to say:

"We have chosen thee for our Mother. Never hadst thou such unworthy and sinful children as we are nor children so weak and frail. Therefore, be thou our strength and our support. We have no resource and often no funds. O compassionate Mother! grant that we may always find bread for thy beloved poor. We are like timid and defenceless children, exposed to the malice of the world, and to its plots made to ruin us. Grant that our little family may not be destroyed, but that it may live for the glory of God, and that it may spread according to His Will."

This prayer, which remains as a testimony to the humility and the penury of the charitable institution,

came to be modified; but its words were not unreal on the lips of the Sisters of the Poor, for they loved the humiliation of poverty. In order that their old people might be better cared for, and to practise holy poverty in the congregation, they partook of the same meat, vegetables, and other food, as their poor people, their dishes being prepared in the same way. And if the Sister who was employed in the kitchen had no food to give out, she informed the Mother-Superior of it in time, "which is always to be done," said the rule, "when there is money in the house. If, through want of money, the meals cannot thus be served, bread only must be provided, but the Sisters are to make known, when necessary, their state of distress." The Superior was called "Good Mother" (for the attempt to say "Little Mother" had been fruitless, and only lasted a short time). Presiding over a family of poor, she was enjoined to command with kindness and gentleness; but, having to keep peace and order in the house, she was obliged also to rule with judicious firmness.

It is necessary to give this account of the foundation, to show with what sacrifice, forgetting themselves for their poor and even taking the form of the poor, these generous women had founded this work. Henceforth, with the growth of the hospitaller family, a new order of things replaced the original one, and what there had been of excessive privations at the beginning was tempered more and more to meet the end of the established rule. Thus the revision of 1851, whilst maintaining the principle that the Little Family was founded on poverty, in regard to the

meals as well as everything else, specified that the staple of the food should be derived from broken food, and from gifts collected by begging, for the old and infirm and for the Little Sisters, and that this should be supplemented in case of need by the purchase of common food and vegetables; that the food should be prepared as is usual in working-class families that live economically. It was decided, also, that no establishment should be founded for any other object than that of assisting the old or infirm poor of either sex.

This valuable document was submitted to the approbation of the Bishop of Rennes. The examination and discussion lasted a year. During this time the hospitaller association continued its foundations, and by a bold stroke established itself in London.

Monsieur Paglians, acting in the name of Cardinal Wiseman, and of the Society of Saint Vincent of Paul, had arranged for the foundation in London. On April 11, 1851, he received the Little Sisters of the Poor at Hammersmith, a suburb since annexed to the capital, and installed them in a house near his own, which he had hired and furnished. The good Mother-Assistant, Marie Thérèse de Jesus, who conducted the three novices forming the little colony, wrote on April 16: "We have now been in London eight days. We have received one poor little Englishwoman, who is very good and fervent. We have paid a visit to His Eminence the Cardinal-Archbishop. He has been very kind, and is coming to visit our house next week. Do pray for us that God may bless this humble beginning." The name

"Little Sisters of the Poor" began to be known in English. It will spread in time from the capital, to the colonies across the ocean.

The great Protestant city, with anti-Catholic prejudices at that time so excited, had to be confronted. Inexperience of customs, ignorance of the language, the youthfulness of the Sisters, rendered the foundation difficult. In the street they were sometimes greeted with hard words,—"daughters of the Pope," "ghosts of another age." But the children, in their simplicity, approached and kissed their hands. Outdoors the Sisters modified their religious dress and muffled themselves up in shawls and bonnets. They succeeded, in spite of difficulties, in receiving twenty-four poor people and obtained the means to support them. Afterwards, two Sisters having arrived from France, the five French novices and the English postulant who composed the community, rented a house in London for £500 sterling, and installed themselves there on October 6, 1851. The good Sister Pauline, Mother-Assistant, spent six weeks in London regulating the home and encouraging the Little Sisters. The house would hold a hundred poor people, and this number was gradually admitted.

Through a fortunate coincidence, the person who introduced the Little Sisters of the Poor to the English public was the famous novelist, Charles Dickens. He had just visited the house in Paris in the Rue Saint Jacques, and on February 14, 1852, in his weekly magazine, *Household Words*, he published his information and impression. This

account, which was reproduced by the press and travelled as far as America, forms part of the history of the Little Sisters.

"THE LITTLE SISTERS.

"*Saturday, February* 14, 1852.

"Alms-giving takes the place of our workhouse system in the economy of a large part of Europe. The giving of alms to the helpless is, moreover, in Catholic countries, a religious office. The voluntary surrender of gifts, each according to his ability, as a means of grace is more prominently insisted on than among Protestants, consequently systematic taxation for the poor is not resorted to. Nor is there so great a necessity for it as in this country, for few nations have so many paupers to provide for as we English, who are accustomed to regard them as a natural element in our society. And thus it happens that when, about ten years ago, there was in France no asylum but the hospital, for aged and ailing poor, the want of institutions for the infirm but healthy was not so severe as to attract the public eye.

"But there was at that time a poor servant-woman, a native of the village of La Croix in Brittany—Jeanne Jugan was her name—who was moved by the gentleness of her heart, and the fervour of her religion, to pity a certain infirm and destitute neighbour, to take her to her side as a companion, and to devote herself to her support. Other infirm people earned, by their helplessness, a claim upon her attention. She went about begging when she

could not work, that she might preserve life as long as Nature would grant it to her infirm charges.

" Her example spread a desire for the performance of similar good offices. Two pious women, her neighbours, united with Jeanne in her pious office. These women cherished as they were able, aged and infirm paupers, nursed them in a little house, and begged for them in the vicinity. The three women, who had so devoted themselves, attracted notice, and were presently received into the Order of Sisters of Charity, in which they took for themselves the name of ' Little Sisters of the Poor ' (' Petites Sœurs des Pauvres ').

" The first house of the Little Sisters of the Poor was opened at Saint-Servan, in Brittany. A healthy flower scatters seed around. We saw that forcibly illustrated in the progress from an origin equally humble of the Rauhe Haus, near Hamburg; we see it now again in the efforts of the Little Sisters, which flourished and fructified with prompt usefulness. On the tenth anniversary of the establishment at Saint-Servan, ten similar houses had been founded in ten different French towns.

" The Petites Sœurs live with their charges in the most frugal way upon the scraps and waste meat which they can collect from the surrounding houses. The voluntary contributions, by which they support their institution, are truly the crumbs falling from the rich man's table. The nurse fares no better than the objects of her care. She lives upon equal terms with Lazarus, and acts towards him in the spirit of a younger sister.

"The establishment at Dinan, over which Jeanne Jugan herself presided, being under repair and not quite fit for the reception of visitors, we will go over the Sisters' house at Paris, which is conducted on exactly the same plan.

"We are ushered into a small parlour, scantily furnished, with some Scripture prints on the walls. A Sister enters to us with a bright look of cheerfulness, such as faces wear when hearts beneath them feel that they are beating to some purpose in the world. She accedes gladly to our desire, and at once leads us into another room of larger size, in which twenty or thirty old women are at this moment finishing their dinner; it being Friday, rice stands on the table in the place of meat. The Sister moves and speaks with the gentleness of a mother among creatures who are in, or are near to, the state of second childhood. You see an old dame fumbling eagerly over her snuff-box lid. The poor creatures are not denied luxuries, for whatever they can earn by their spinning is their own money, and they buy with it any indulgences they please, among which nothing is so highly prized or eagerly coveted as a pinch of snuff

"In the dormitories on the first-floor some lie bed-ridden. Gentler still, if possible, is now the Sister's voice. The rooms throughout the house are airy, with large windows, and those inhabited by the Sisters are distinguished from the rest by no mark of indulgence or superiority.

"We descend now into the old men's department, and enter a warm room, with a stove in the centre.

One old fellow has his feet upon a little foot-warmer, and thinly pipes out that he is very comfortable now, for he is always warm. The chills of age and the chills of the cold pavement remain together in his memory; but he is very comfortable now—very comfortable. Another decrepit man, with white hair and bowed back—who may have been proud in his youth of a rich voice for love-song—talks of music to the Sister, and on being asked to sing, blazes out with joyous gestures and strikes up a song of Béranger's in a cracked shaky voice, which sometimes—like a river given to flow underground—is lost entirely, and then bubbles up again quite thick with mud.

"We go into a little oratory, where all pray together nightly before they retire to rest. Thence we descend into a garden for the men, and pass thence by a door into the women's court. The chapel-bell invites us to witness the assembly of the Sisters for the repetition of their Psalms and Litanies. From the chapel we return into the court, and enter a large room, where the women are all busy with their spinning-wheels. One old soul immediately totters to the Sister (not the same Sister with whom we set out), and insists on welcoming her daughter with a kiss. We are informed that it is a delusion of her old age to recognise in this Sister really her own child, who is certainly far away, and may possibly be dead. The Sister embraces her affectionately, and does nothing to disturb the pleasant thought.

"And now we go into the kitchen. Preparation

for coffee is in progress. The dregs of coffee that have been collected from the houses of the affluent in the neighbourhood are stewed for a long time with great care. The Sisters say that they produce a very tolerable result, and, at any rate, every inmate is thus enabled to have a cup of coffee every morning, to which love is able to administer the finest Mocha flavour. A Sister enters from her rounds out of doors with two cans full of broken victuals. She is a healthy and, I think, a handsome woman. Her daily work is to go out with the cans directly after she has had her morning coffee and to collect food for the ninety old people that are in the house. As fast as she fills her cans she brings them to the kitchen, and goes out again, continuing in this work daily till four o'clock.

"You do not like this begging? What are the advertisements on behalf of our own hospitals? What are the collections? What are the dinners, the speeches, the charity sermons? A few weak women, strong in heart, without advertisement or dinner or charity sermons, without urgent appeals to a sympathizing public, who have no occasion to exercise charity by enticing it to balls and to theatrical benefits, patiently collect waste food from house to house, and feed the poor with it humbly and tenderly.

"The cans are now to be emptied, the contents being divided into four compartments, according to their nature—broken meat, vegetables, slices of puddings, fish, etc. Each is afterwards submitted to the best cookery that can be contrived. The

choicest things are set aside. 'These,' said a Sister, with a look of satisfaction, 'will be for our poor dear sick.'

"The number of Sisters altogether in this house engaged in attendance on the ninety infirm paupers is fourteen. They divide the duties of the house among themselves—two serve in the kitchen, two in the laundry, one begs, one devotes herself to constant personal attendance on the wants of the old men, and so on with the others, each having her special department. The whole sentiment of the household is that of a very large and very amiable family. To feel that they console the last days of the infirm and aged poor is all the Little Sisters get for their hard work."

Let us return to France to follow the organization which is being accomplished. The summer, 1851, saw the birth of the establishment at Laval, and the autumn that of the house at Lyons. The foundation at Laval, which took place on June 24, 1851, was exceptional. A legacy consisting of a house, a garden, a meadow, and a small pond in a suburb, having been made to the hospice administration, no better way was found to utilize it than to entrust it to the new hospitallers. In reality, a hospice cannot live without income, without foundations of beds, without a paid staff, and all this could be had gratis with the Little Sisters of the Poor. They accepted it, reserving their freedom of administration in accordance with the object of their work.

On November 2, 1851, two Sisters arrived in

Lyons. Abbé Coudour, who took an active part in the foundation, interpreted thus the impression of the inhabitants of Lyons: "Unknown, strangers, dressed in a new though very simple costume, they brought with them for their great work only a good will, proof against everything, and an unlimited confidence in Divine Providence. What resources have been prepared at least for their reception and to facilitate the accomplishment of their mission? None. What endowment awaits them? None. Where is the house destined for them? The house is still unknown. What is their capital? Poverty. Where are their incomes? Nowhere and everywhere. Nowhere—they have nothing certain, and no obligation is rigorously contracted in regard to them. They are going to find some hearts which, knowing their work, will receive them with that veneration which cannot be idle, and that love which brings forth devotedness. Everywhere—rich and poor will contribute to their prosperity. Scarcely established, they will see innumerable brooks, issuing from all ranks of society and following the same inclination, come to throw themselves into the river of their charity, not to be lost there, but in some sort to grow and multiply. All, then, lies in the future, all rests on private charity." On December 1, 1851, the Little Sisters of the Poor took possession of a hired house in the Place des Bernardines, with Sister Théodore, one of the pillars of the Little Work, as Superior. Six months later the home counted ninety-four old people.

Cardinal de Bonald provided the humble beast of

burden. People used to see one of the Little Sisters in the streets of Lyons leading by the bridle a donkey with two baskets, which were daily filled with eatables, vegetables, broken victuals from the hotels, coffee grounds, etc. This attracted the attention and at times the mockery of the people and sometimes mobs. There was need of humility, devotedness, intrepidity; but in these the Sisters were not wanting. So they went on, thinking about their family of poor and Saint Joseph, their protector, leading the donkey in the flight into Egypt, also meditating on Jesus making His entrance into Jerusalem riding on an ass. It sometimes happened that the Sisters who were begging were rebuffed, and instead of alms received insults. This happened once at the house of a tradesman, who was in a bad temper that day, and abused religious communities. The Sister received the shower of abuse without showing any emotion, contenting herself with modestly keeping her eyes down. When the man ceased to speak, she raised her eyes and said, with a gentle voice: "Now that you have given me something for myself, please give me something for my poor." The tradesman felt a tear rise to his eyes, and soon gave his offering. The Sister withdrew, blessing God, who thus changes the heart of men.

Here is an episode which happened in Paris in 1851. The police arrested Sister Adrienne in the market-place at Saint-Germain, where the tradeswomen were giving to her in abundance. At that time there was no carriage; it was the Sisters and the old people who carried the gifts in baskets and

basins. One day, when the begging had been fruitful and they were preparing to leave, two policemen stopped the Sister, and in the name of the law took her to the Inspector of Police. As he was occupied, they made her sit down on the bench of the prisoners awaiting trial. The good Sister recited her office and then her beads as the people came and went. At last her turn arrived, and the Commissary questioned her on her misdemeanour of begging. She explained the work and her employment. "Return to look after your poor," said the humane officer, "but beg no more." At this moment, the women of the market and the old people rushed into the court. "They cannot prevent your coming to us and our giving to you," cried the tradespeople; "you will come back, Sister." In fact, she did return, and was henceforth left in peace.

The fifteen homes sheltered 1,500 old people in the year 1852 when the house in Lille began. The Superior-General had said: "We shall make a nice foundation in Lille because there are so many poor." This saying had made a great impression. "She did not say there are many benefactors in Lille, but many poor," said the benefactors among themselves. The Little Sisters saw gathered around them the most sympathetic, pious, and charitable friends, who installed them on February 2 in a house which they had purchased for them in the Rue Saint-Sauveur. "It is a real Providence," said a public writer of that time, "that they dwell in the centre of the most populous and the poorest parish, at the focus

of so many miseries, both moral and physical. Their appearance, their example, their sympathy, will be a new and mighty element of regeneration for this miserable portion of our population." A procession consisting of schools, religious communities, ladies and gentlemen, and clergy, followed by a sympathetic crowd, singing hymns, while the chiming of bells conducted the five Little Sisters and twelve old persons from the church to the home. These formed the nucleus of the establishment. The press having made an appeal, the Mother-Superior went round the streets with a cart for three days. She received a quantity of old furniture and old clothes, which provided the household requisites and the wardrobe of the home.

At the same time, February 8, 1852, two Little Sisters took possession of a house in Marseilles, of which the first story was occupied by rooms filled with corn, and the second by ten households. The property had two doors each bearing a number, but there were only three apartments empty. At this good news, four Little Sisters left Paris for Marseilles. After paying for their tickets, they had only two francs in their pockets and some provisions for the journey. In those days, people went by train to Châlon, then on to Lyons by boat along the river Saône. After the little expense of food and of the journey down the river were paid, they had twopence left. Alas! after being on the water some time, the boat which carried them split in two, and the travellers were in danger of perishing. It was then that a passenger made a remark which

has come down to our times: "No, we shall not perish; we have the Little Sisters of the Poor on board!" Putting their trust in God, they lifted up their hearts and prayers to Him. The boat was got to shore, and everyone was able to land; but as the boat continued to split, the luggage fell in the water; not, however, the luggage of the Little Sisters, for their poor trunk had been forgotten at Paris. Some good religious harboured them while waiting for the next boat and supplied them with provisions. The rest of the journey was made without difficulty. At Marseilles, the Little Sisters obtained authorization to have the five rooms emptied that were filled with corn. But having no money, they applied to the city porters, who arranged the affair and sent them gratuitously sixty strong men. The corn was dislodged; and then came the turn of the ten households, for the proprietor, won over to the cause, made some compensation in concert with the Sisters, and they took possession of the place. It was taken by storm by sixty old men, who gave a new aspect to the property. The Good Mother was Sister Julie-Marie, one of the pillars of the association. The ecclesiastical authority officially supported the foundation, and hence the circular of Mgr. de Mazenod* to his clergy, dated February 13, 1852, is an historical document:

"You are aware already what good the Little Sisters of the Poor do wherever they exist. Their

* Bishop of Marseilles and founder of the congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Institute, founded but yesterday in obscurity and abjection, has sent forth a light that confounds the age, showing it once more the power of a charity, far superior to all its costly conceptions. From what is passing at Rennes, Bordeaux, Nantes, Rouen, Besançon, Lyons, Paris, London, and elsewhere, it is permitted to believe that God has willed to choose that which is feeblest in order to give a new demonstration of the inexhaustible fertility of Catholic charity, always ready to multiply and to vary its resources according to the times, even at the price of sacrifices the most painful to human nature. The Little Sisters not only are poor with their poor, but for them they make themselves beggars. They serve them with their own hands with touching care, and feed them admirably from the fruit of their begging, while they feed themselves with the leavings of those, in whom they honour and serve the Divine Master. Their devotedness has for its object the care of aged poor of both sexes. These old people, often isolated or a burden to their families, who cannot or will not take care of them, live, or rather die, in a helplessness as deplorable for their souls as for their bodies. They will find in the foundation in question the double help of which they have need. You will make the faithful understand how important it is that they should associate with the good work which will be done, and which, I hope, will find no less sympathy and co-operation in our town than in other large towns in France."

During this time the situation of the Little Work was properly organized at Rennes, and the future

was full of hope. In May, the event so long expected took place, and the decree of approbation was accorded. It ran thus:

"*Godefroy Saint Marc, by the Divine mercy and the grace of the Holy Apostolic See, Bishop of Rennes,*

"Having had the constitutions of the hospitaller family of the Sisters of the Poor carefully examined, and desiring to give a formal approbation to this congregation, which since its establishment has received such visible marks of Divine protection, and which has not ceased to give proofs of its devotion and zeal for the care of the aged and infirm poor. On the report which has been made to us by one of our Vicars-General, we have approved, and by these present letters do commend, the statutes of the said hospitaller family, and we permit our dear daughters, called the Little Sisters of the Poor, to establish themselves in our diocese, to live there under our jurisdiction in conformity with their rules. We name the Rev. Auguste-Marie Le Pailleur, Superior-General of the said hospitaller family, and Sister Marie-Augustine, Mother-General. In the future the appointment of the Superior will be made in accordance with the rules laid down in the constitutions.

"Given at Rennes, the 29th day of the month of May, in the year of grace 1852.

"✠ GODEFROY, *Bishop of Rennes.*"*

* By a bull dated January 3, 1859, the bishopric of Rennes was raised to an archbishopric, with Mgr. Saint Marc for first titular.

There was deep joy amongst the friends of the work. One of the directors of the seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Paris struck the true note: "The approbation given by the Bishop of Rennes affords me great pleasure. I was wishing to see a Bishop occupy himself with this work and consolidate it by authority. It is a fulcrum that was necessary, and God has supplied it at the proper time. Here is a work which is authorized in the eyes of the Church; hence it will prosper more uniformly. This is a new foundation, and God wishes to preserve this modesty, humility, and this spirit of detachment in the heart of all the Little Sisters. You are properly placed in the country of Brittany, which has seen the birth of this work."

In the preceding month of August they had acquired a property named "La Piletière," in a suburb of Rennes. Some large and old buildings of irregular construction, extended between the road and the river Vilaine. The Venerable Abbé Caron had begun there in 1785 an establishment for the poor; then, the manufacture of canvas for sails for the navy had prospered there, before the rise of steamboats. The establishment, restored to its primitive destination, was filled with poor, and became for some years the centre of the congregation and of the novitiate. On May 31, 1852, Mgr. Saint Marc presided at its inauguration, in the presence of numerous friends, the Superior-General, and the good mothers of the different houses, assembled for the occasion. We listen with pleasure to this authoritative voice: "He spoke of the

treasures of charity and love which God had placed in His holy Church, to bring to all sorrows and sufferings, relief and consolation. He showed the economy of Providence, which, when society experiences new wants, raises up a new religious congregation to fulfil a mission of zeal and devotedness. Recalling the visit which he had made some ten years before, at Saint-Servan, to a small cellar where the first Sister began this work of which they did not expect such a rapid development, he showed the hand of God sustaining in the midst of difficulties what was little, feeble, and poor, to effect great marvels. Then, sketching an outline of the mission which the new congregation had to fulfil, the prelate showed that the character which had to distinguish it, the virtue which had to preserve it, was humility. To enter into the spirit of their vocation, the Sisters must be really and always Little Sisters of the Poor. It is only through humility that they will obtain the graces and blessings which God desires to pour out upon them."

This house was called the House of Saint Joseph. The reason was as follows: At that time, when they did not know where to place the novitiate, the Good Mother Marie Thérèse of Jesus, who was in charge of it in Paris, confided this grave affair to a Saint. Not knowing whom to choose, she had recourse to an expedient suggested to her by the reading of Father Patrignani. She wrote on small pieces of paper the names of several saints, folded up the papers and drew a lottery. The name of Saint Joseph came out first. She folded them again,

mixed the papers and drew a second time, and the name of Saint Joseph appeared again. She repeated the trial, and to her great astonishment the result was the same. Understanding from this that God wished to give Saint Joseph as protector to the mother-house and the novitiate, she promised, subject to the ratification of legitimate authorities, that the house which they sought for with so much fervour should be put under the patronage of the holy Patriarch. The promise was too agreeable to the taste and devotion of all the Sisters not to be ratified;—it became the promise of the little family. From that time a tower, surmounted by the statue of Saint Joseph, was erected above the mother-house and the novitiate.

CHAPTER VII

TWENTY NEW FOUNDATIONS (1852-1854)

The entrance into Belgium—Death of one of the foundresses—The General, the Emperor—The Burgomaster of Brussels—A dressing-room of the Little Sisters—The marvellous multiplication of food.

As if Providence had waited only for the ecclesiastical approbation to enlarge the congregation, within three years the number of establishments increased from seventeen to thirty-seven—Bourges, Pau, Vannes, Colmar, La Rochelle, Dijon, Saint-Omer, Brest, in 1852; Chartres, Liège, Bolbec, Paris (third house), in 1852; Toulouse, Saint-Dizier, Havre, Blois, Brussels, Le Mans, Tarare, Paris (fourth house) in 1854. As we cannot follow in detail these twenty foundations, we will attempt an outline in characteristic anecdotes.

The foundation of Colmar, June 18, 1852, put the institution in touch with the German language, and on this account marks a date in its annals. The foundation of Liège marks another. On July 26, 1852, an Assistant-General and a Sister arrived in Belgium, at Liège, at the request of Rev. Groteclaez, parish priest of Saint-Nicholas. This good priest said to them: "Welcome, Sisters! Let us go at once to see the Chartreuse; it is a place that will be very suitable for the work. Two hours later it is

to be sold." He led them towards Mount Cornillon, on which it is situated, and there he showed them that beautiful property, praising the advantages which had decided him to choose it, and exerting himself to make them share his sentiments. But the good Mother Marie de la Conception was quite preoccupied, and seemed to take no interest in it at all. Being obliged at the end to explain herself, she said: "Reverend Father, this is all very beautiful, but I have instructions from my Superiors directing me to see the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, to obtain their approval, and to get to know Liège, before deciding anything; so holy obedience passes before everything else." The Dean was very much pained at this answer. He led them back to his house in silence. Having arrived there he said to them: "Sisters, I am going to the auction, because it is necessary that I should be present; but I shall not push the matter further, as it seems that you do not wish it." The two Little Sisters waited with anxiety the issue of this affair, earnestly beseeching the Lord not to allow their obedience to harm the foundation. In the evening the Dean entered sadly, and said: "It is all over about the Chartreuse; Mr. Laport has bought it. The auctioneer, however, had reserved to himself three days before giving a definite answer." The following day, the good parish priest took the Little Sisters to visit the authorities and influential persons. Everywhere the reception was encouraging. They then began to look for a habitation to suit them; they visited several houses, but found nothing convenient. At

last they returned to the Chartreuse, which was not yet definitely gone. The good Mother Marie de la Conception, struck by the numerous advantages combined there, kept on repeating, "It is the Chartreuse we want!" While they were going along she perceived a niche at the end of an avenue of lime-trees; then, in her vivid faith, she cried out: "Good Saint Joseph, if you obtain the Chartreuse for us, I will put you there!" The Dean, too, determined to use every effort to secure this privileged situation for the poor old people. The purchaser understood the noble aim of the work, and stopped at the appointed sum of 51,500 francs. Mr. Rayet, the owner, accepted these conditions, and the contract was signed July 31. Thus the Little Sisters of the Poor were established in Belgium.

Two months later, the same Assistant-General made the foundation at La Rochelle, at the request of the Bishop. The Mayor appeared to be much surprised at seeing the Little Sisters, and still more so when he learned that they provided subsistence for their homes by collecting alms. "I do not know why you have come into our town," he said to them. "We have here a large hospital, and, moreover, I should not like to let the poor of my town be taken care of by poor women, who are obliged to go about begging themselves." The Sisters were very much pained and embarrassed. They referred the matter to the mother-house, and received orders to leave the place if the Municipality persisted in refusing its consent. Let the reader remember the date of the foundation—September, 1852. The

Little Sisters of the Poor were just establishing their mother-house and their novitiate at Rennes. They had then only twenty houses, were not recognised by the Government, and were little known to the greater part of the public. That explains how the first foundations were made with partial approbations, and why they encountered sometimes a certain opposition. But when the Little Sisters had succeeded in obtaining toleration, the work itself was not slow in obtaining the suffrage of all. That is what happened at La Rochelle, for at the visit on the following New Year's Day, the Mayor formally declared that he was a friend and benefactor of the establishment. At Dijon (January 1, 1853) it was the Municipality that provided the lodging for the Little Sisters, and the Mayor who made the first offering.

These good tidings arrived at Rennes at the time when measures were being taken to organize the novitiate, which counted sixty-four postulants (February, 1853). Until then it had been customary to send the postulants to some branch-home immediately after their clothing, and to recall them to the novitiate simply for a retreat preparatory to the vows, so that the year of the novitiate was spent in one of the homes with the poor. In the month of March, 1853, it was decided that this custom should cease, and that no novice should be admitted before she had passed three months at the novitiate. The Sisters were also occupied in enlarging the property and accommodation, in view of the wants of the

future. The Rev. Paul Gontar, attracted by the devotedness and humility of the Little Sisters, constituted himself the voluntary chaplain of the novitiate, first at Paris, then at Rennes; and as he was favoured with means, he contributed an important sum for the development of the establishment.

Alas! on August 12, 1853, the congregation was in mourning. The good Mother-Assistant Marie Thérèse de Jesus, who had long been suffering, died at the mother-house at Rennes. How many others since then, broken down, like her, by the sacrifice of charity, have died before their time! A fearless worker at "the small beginnings," she had at least the joy to see "the Little Work" taking consistence and promising a glorious future. She went to her reward.

But we must continue our narration. Various personages will be mentioned. The home for the aged at Saint-Omer had just been opened, with the generous co-operation of the family of Givenchy. Now, the army was camping in the vicinity, and General Canrobert commanded. He patronized, in the institution of the Little Sisters, the army of the poor, was the first to make his offering, and gave them a guide on their begging rounds. The Little Sisters who made the collection were presented by the sergeant in the name of the General, and they went round the camp as though on a special mission, accosting the officers in brilliant uniforms, and passing in their black mantles through the midst of

groups of soldiers. When the period of the exercises was over, Canrobert, before leaving for Paris, gave the home all that his tent contained, including the splendid remains of the farewell banquet.

The Empress Eugénie was preoccupied with the lot of the poor old people in the suburbs. At her request, the Little Sisters began their third establishment in the capital on November 23, 1853. On the following March 27 the Sovereigns honoured the home by their visit, and thus gave it a high proof of interest. They were received by the good Mother-Assistant Lucie-Marie, the tenth Little Sister of the Poor, one of the little stars of the original constellation of Saint-Servan, surrounded by the Little Sisters of Paris. The old people of the three houses assembled for the occasion, applauded their Majesties with sentiments of gratitude and recognition of the honour conferred on them. "The Emperor and Empress were very kind," wrote the good Mother. "They put to us many questions about our manner of supporting our house and feeding our old people; they appeared greatly touched, and could but admire the care of Divine Providence."

The Rev. Mallois, Chaplain of the Court, loved this work, "which is," he said, "a stroke of the genius of charity in this century, and will be one of its glories. One knows," he added, "how difficult it is to make men live together of different characters and education, especially when they have arrived at an advanced age; an old man has his habits, his ideas, even his caprices, to which he clings as to life, because he considers them to be a part of himself.

Notwithstanding, they succeeded in melting down all these divergencies and establishing the most perfect harmony between all these old people, who had never seen each other. This was effected by indulgence and gentleness; without a harsh word or severity they make themselves loved, and this is the secret of their influence over the aged. They are patient, they wait and finish by establishing amongst them a spirit of peace and union; politeness and charity even reign among them; they love each other, and are eager to oblige and to give pleasure." He resumed playfully: "Have you seen the drawer full of crusts, when you visited the houses of the Little Sisters? It is a real curiosity; there is a complete collection of crusts—thin crusts and thick crusts, crusts of white bread and crusts of brown bread, dry crusts, etc. Of its kind, it is the finest collection in the universe."

Let us now cross the frontier and for the second time enter Belgium, where the hospitaller family was called into the capital by a committee of ladies, and where the Burgomaster placed at their disposal some old barracks, which the Little Sisters at once filled with aged sick. "The Burgomaster of Brussels," said the official document, "authorizes the Little Sisters of the Poor to collect the necessary help to maintain the refuge for the aged which they have instituted in this town. Given at the Town Hall, April 5, 1854, de Broukère." The Duchess of Brabant, the future Queen of Belgium, became a most devoted benefactress of the home, and embroidered vestments for the poor chapel.

At what price did the Little Sisters of the Poor obtain this success? It is necessary here to look at the other side of things and take views of the interior, in order to understand clearly their life of abnegation. The home at Brest was opened on February 1, 1853; numbers of old people arrived in complete destitution. "We had received some body-linen, and could give them a change at first; but sheets were wanting. We improvised some by sewing together pieces of canvas and cotton, and we spread them as nicely as we could on the straw mattresses." The dormitory of the Little Sisters was in a corresponding condition; they had passed on some of their sheets, blankets, and pillows to the old people, and had made themselves some coverings of tarpaulin. On Sunday, they went to the service in the parish church. "We had worked at the dresses for the women through a part of the night, using the morning-gowns which had been given to us, but still many things were wanting. Each Sister took one of the poor women and dressed her, taking from her wardrobe or from that of another Sister whatever else was needed." They were half stripped, but charity is the wealth of the poor, and the mantle of the Little Sisters covered their own poverty; then they were able to bring the good women to Mass, and they rejoiced to have offered to God something at their own expense—that is a pleasure peculiar to foundations. In these days a maid-servant came to visit them; moved by this penury, she retired for a moment, took off one of her petticoats, gave it quickly to one of the Sisters,

and disappeared. When one thus builds on sacrifice, Heaven gives its blessing, and the future is assured.

On June 7, 1853, the Little Sisters of the Poor arrived at Chartres, and took possession of a hired house in the Place Saint-Pierre. They found a large round table in the parlour, four iron bedsteads in one room, two in another; then, in a closet, six straw mattresses, six mattresses, six bolsters, six quilts. Their surprise was great. "We were all enraptured at such goodness on the part of our Lord." By this cry of admiration, one may judge at what point of destitution the first houses had been founded. The same evening, a priest came to ask them to admit a paralyzed woman, sixty-eight years of age, quite a giantess, who had been converted lately after having done harm by selling and lending bad books. To obtain for the sinner the grace of a Christian death, they transported her to the house of the Little Sisters. The next day the priest was able to bring Communion to the penitent woman, but in what penury was our Lord received! A white handkerchief was spread on the mantelpiece, and the priest brought a wax-candle in his pocket to place near the Blessed Sacrament, as they had neither altar nor candlestick. The first communion was made in the house at Chartres.

At Blois a novice, Sister Marie Auguste, established the foundation and became Superior. At that time, after the clothing, many novices were foundresses; they gained their vows as in olden times knights gained their spurs, on the battle-field. These

things are only possible at the beginning of undertakings, when grace gives the impetus and the army is improvised; afterwards all falls into place, and is organized according to rule. At Blois, then, the instalment took place on March 25, 1854. A week later a person, who kept a domestic agency, came to offer to wash the linen and other garments, until the Sisters had the means of doing it themselves. The good Mother thanked her for her generous offer, but said that there was no linen to wash. The woman appeared quite surprised, and took this answer as a refusal; till the good Mother explained to her that the Little Sisters had not even a change of linen and clothes. The woman went home at once and procured all that was necessary of this kind for the community. In the end, she would not take back what she had lent, assuring them that she was not yet so poor as they were at the home.

The history of the Little Sisters is full of these flowers of charity, which have an evangelical perfume; they are the *fioretti* of the little family in their grace and simplicity.

At the time of the foundation at Saint-Dizier, in 1854, a meeting was held in the parish for the work of the Holy Childhood. The children, who were informed of the event, had obtained gifts from their families; these they brought with them to the church to be blessed, and from thence they went to the home of the Sisters to deposit them. There were quantities of little packets of salt, sugar, rice, bread, wine, coffee—a little of everything. Ought we not to accustom our children to such works of charity?

Thus the work of the Little Sisters everywhere struggled against the material difficulties of a foundation; but the idea of doing good cheers all, and already a ray of glory seems to pass over the humble beginning.

We find in the Bolbec journal the thought of the enlightened public at this epoch: "As favoured as the great towns, Bolbec possessed a home of the Little Sisters of the Poor. That is to say, the most wretched of our fellow-citizens can now grow old among us, without any fear of being, in their last days, without a roof to shelter them, or a hearth at which to warm themselves, without ever lacking a heart to love them or a friendly hand to close their eyes."

We find from the pen of a talented writer a description of the collection in Paris: "I was walking along the market-place of Sèvres one morning at the most busy time, when I saw coming up slowly, about twenty steps from me, a low narrow cart, drawn by a meek little donkey; a Sister walked at the side of the donkey, and an old man in a gray great-coat, occupying the seat, was driving, whip in hand. As the little cart advanced, a kind of cheerful murmur passed from stall to stall. One tradeswoman left her counter to deposit a whiting in it; her neighbour followed close, bringing a couple of eggs. Soon, when the cart was in the centre of the market-place, there was a sort of avalanche, from all sides, cabbages, turnips, leeks, potatoes, came pouring in. Out of one window fell a packet of old clothes, and from another a pair of sheets (a little

worn and threadbare, but still capable of being made into excellent pocket-handkerchiefs, and even very presentable napkins). At every one of these presents the donkey, which seemed to be quite accustomed to it, shook his long ears gravely; the Sister bowed and gave a smile of gratitude to the donor."

At the same period Donozo Cortès, the Spanish Ambassador in Paris, one of the glories of Catholicism, took pleasure in going to visit the home in the Rue Saint-Jacques, carrying his old clothes under his arm, and making his offerings in person.

Thus the hospitaller institution was taking, more and more, a place in society. The life of the Little Sisters was a mixture of joys and sacrifices. Their joys were great in seeing the work for the old people firmly rooting itself, the phalanx of vocations ever increasing, the central government settled, and the benefactors growing more attached to the work. But their sacrifices, also great, grew with the number of houses, the increase of the poor, the material responsibilities, and the arduous life from day to day. Providence did not abandon them in the moments of distress, and several houses relate marvellous incidents. They had seen, at one time or another, the food multiplying at the precise moment when food was failing for the meals of their cherished poor. We have related the story of the marvellous soup-kettle at Tours, now let us quote some like incidents of Bourges and Poitiers.

In 1853, with the holidays, came scarcity from dearth of the usual leavings; one day the collection

failed, so that they received nothing, and were supperless. The poor Sister who was the cook, not knowing what to do, looked in every corner and discovered only some dry prunes. She went to the Superior, and told her how things stood. Good Mother Raphael, calling to mind that the work is founded on Providence, replied: "Go and cook your prunes, and do not doubt; our Lord will not let you want." The little kitchen Sister returned, full of confidence, put the prunes into the saucepan, but, alas! the bottom of it was scarcely covered. She prayed the Lord to multiply them, if it was His will for everyone to have some. The idea came to her to soak some flour in water. "Ah, well," she said, "I shall have enough for some thirty poor." At last she dished the prunes up; as she took them out of the saucepan it was filled again; it was as when our Lord multiplied the five loaves. There was food enough to satisfy 113 persons, and one dish was still left.

Some years later, in the depth of winter, they were at Poitiers, with only one barrel of wine in the cellar, and triple that quantity would have been necessary to carry them on to the next season. They could not make up their minds to withhold this little comfort from their sick and old people who were working, so they continued to give them their habitual portion. The barrel lasted eleven months,* though it was only the proper measure for four months, and when the new season came round they filled forty bottles, two large pitchers, and every

* December, 1859, to November, 1860.

bottle they found in the house with the remains. When the last bottle was filled, the wine ceased.

These facts are related, since they strengthened the invincible hope. Has not the work a supernatural side? And the supernatural, is it less possible in details than in the whole? The Little Sisters did not believe so. They are, in this case, the witnesses whom we must believe. Their work is there as the imposing monument of their faith, confidence, and absolute devotedness.

CHAPTER VIII

THE APPROBATION OF THE CHURCH

Introduction of the cause—Testimonial letters—Pius IX and the five hundred Little Sisters—Rome speaks—Development of the Constitutions.

By the mere fact of its growth the canonical question of the hospitaller family presented itself again. As we have said, such a work required an approbation of a General Order. The Ordinary of the place, having no jurisdiction over the other dioceses, could not communicate to the rule and the work, which he protected, the power of maintaining unity and regularity always and everywhere; but he prepared the way and became, by means of his position itself, the authorized intermediary in the negotiations with the Holy See. Already, in 1850, on account of the difficulties in the situation at Tours and at Paris, some devoted and clear-sighted friends had favoured a first overture in the direction of Rome. The appeal had awakened no echo because the demand had no official base. The episcopal approbation of Rennes gave this.

Even before issuing the decree of episcopal approbation, and in order to mark his intention plainly, Mgr. Saint Marc had sent his letter of approbation to Rome in February, 1852. He wrote thus:*

* " Quatuor filiæ ex humili loco et litterarum humanarum prorsus insciæ, inter quas nuncupata est Joanna Jugan,

"Four women of humble condition and ignorant of learning, amongst whom must be counted Jeanne Jugan, having collected a certain number of poor persons, old and infirm of both sexes, have nourished them, taken care of them, and prepared them for a Christian death. They adopted, with a view to acquiring higher perfection, a truly arduous life, and set themselves to beg from door to door in the name of the poor whom they served, and to collect from all sides the remains of food, torn clothes, and firewood. Events have shown that God is pleased with these works of charity; for it has been given us to see that after overcoming many difficulties, in the space of a few years, the number of Sisters has increased, the Spirit of God has been shed more and more into their hearts, and the poor have been received in multitudes, in the hospices of which these pious virgins laid the foundation at Saint-Servan."

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cum nonullos utriusque sexus senes et infirmos egestate laborantes, alendos curandosque ac tandem morti Christianæ disponendos suscepissent, mox altioris perfectionis acquirendæ gratia, vitæ genus vere arduum arripientes, nomine pauperum quibus famulabantur emendicare ostiatim et colligere undequaque tum reliquias ciborum, tum laceres vestes, tum frusta lignorum cœperunt. Quantum ista officia charitatis gratum Deus haberet comprobavit eventus; nam multas post difficultates superatas paucis annis vix elapsis, numerum sororum supra modum auctum, et, illo crescente, spiritum Dei magis ac magis in cordibus ipsarum diffusum, pauperes quam plurimos receptos in hospitio cujus illæ piæ virgines fundamentum fecerant apud Sanctum Servatium, nobis videre datum est."

Fortified by the episcopal approbation, the Superiors-General brought the affair in due form before the Roman court. They applied for the laudatory brief, which is the first degree in the process of general approbation. A note addressed by them to Cardinal Fornari, shows us the tenor of the request: "It is not the approbation of the constitutions that we solicit; that would be premature in every way, for experience has still many things to teach us. What we ask for is only the first brief which praises the work, and is an indication of the way in which we should continue for the glory of God, for the development, good administration, unity, and spirit of the work. This is an indication consequently, of the kinds of addition, suppression, or modification to be made in the draft of the Constitutions." This note is of great retrospective value; it is the sounding line which shows the depth of the ideas which then prevailed in the councils of the association.

In answer to these requests, the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, on August 13, 1852, applied to the Bishop of Rennes, to obtain from him official information regarding the institution and letters of approbation from the Bishops having jurisdiction over the different establishments of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Important testimonial letters were thus collected by the Bishop of Rennes, and transmitted by him to the Holy Apostolic See. There was an unanimity of praise for the work and its charitable purpose.

Cardinal Mathieu, Archbishop of Besançon, wrote on September 17, 1852: "Although scarcely born, the pious congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor bears great fruit of religion and of charity, and, has everywhere the approbation of good people. The Sisters spread the good odour of Christ, and gain the hearts of all by modesty, piety, religion, and charity."

Cardinal Donnet, Archbishop of Bordeaux, said: "Desiring to contribute to the success of this request, and wishing to give these pious and worthy Sisters a true testimony of our affection and confidence, we attest and declare that the Little Sisters of the Poor formed a home in the town of Bordeaux three years ago; that they support, by means of alms which they collect, more than sixty old men and women; that they exercise constantly in regard to them, both as regards soul and body, a charity beyond all praise; and that the piety of these virtuous women, their modesty, their noble devotedness to the holy work they carry on, obtain for them the ever-increasing respect and admiration of the inhabitants of the town."

Cardinal Wiseman, Archbishop of Westminster, on October 26, 1852, wrote: "No religious devoted to the relief of the poor give themselves up to that work with greater zeal for charity, and, above all, with greater patience, and it will not be easy to surpass them in the exercise of these virtues. Since they have opened one of their homes in London, where more than seventy women advanced in age are nourished and cared for with exquisite

charity, they have gained the hearts of everyone, not only Catholics, but also Protestants."*

Side by side with these remarkable testimonials must be inscribed the co-operation of friends of the work, who prepared a favourable opinion at Rome itself: Father Jandel, Superior-General of the Dominicans, several Jesuit fathers and French priests, the Princess Borghesi, Louis Veuillot.

Rome moved with customary prudent slowness, but appreciated this new form of charity. A favourable vote had already been issued, and the affair was about to end simply in the laudatory decree which was sought for, when the Archbishop of Paris intervened. Mgr. Sibour, without opposing himself to the other Bishops in regard to the object of the institution, which he praised, found the organization defective in some points, and pointed out certain difficulties of application. His objection, dated August 7, 1853, enlarged the discussion and advanced the cause. The hospitaller congregation, well advised, extended its request no longer to the laudatory decree alone, but beyond that to the approval of the institution itself, postponing the approbation of the constitutions to a more convenient time.

* Nullæ credo religiosæ familiæ pauperum solatio addictæ, majori cum caritate zelo, et præsertim patientia huic operæ incumbent, neque facile erit ipsas in harum virtutum exercitio superare. Ex quo Londini hospitium suum aperuerunt, in quo septuaginta et amplius provectæ ætatis mulieres nutriuntur, et exquisita caritate curantur omnium non solum catholicorum sed et protestantium animos sibi devincerunt.

Some months later, in February, 1854, the Superiors-General went to Rome to give the necessary information. Pope Pius IX received them with kindness, and listened with interest to the account of the progress of the work. Learning that the Little Sisters of the Poor were five hundred in number, he said: "You are no longer a little flock. You are like the disciples of our Saviour, who were also five hundred!" July 9, 1854, was a solemn day for the congregation; the Church spoke, and promulgated the decree of which the translation is as follows:

"DECREE.*

"Having seen the testimonial letters of the local Bishops, and heard the desires of the Cardinals

* "Decretum.—Attentis igitur litteris testimonialibus Antistitum locorum, et, audito voto S.R.E. Cardinalium Consultationibus et Negotiis Episcoporum et Regularium præpositionum, Sanctitas Sua memoratum Institutem parvularum Sororum pauperum præsentis Decreti tenore, rite Congregationem votorum simplicium, salva jurisdictione Ordinariorum ad formam Sacrorum Canonum approbat atque confirmat, dilata ad aliud tempus Constitutionum approbatione una cum examine articuli respicientis officium Moderatoris generalis; nempe an idem officium supprimendum sit; ita tamen ut interim Presbyter Le Pailleur permaneat in exercitio sui officii uti promotor Instituti ad beneplacitum Sanctæ Sedis.

"Parvulæ igitur Sorores pauperum hoc publico Apostolicæ Sedis testimonio commendatæ ferventius incumbant in opera misericordiæ erga pauperes, ut a divino Sponso in adventu suo audire mereantur: Quod minimis istis fecistis mihi fecistis.

charged with the consultations and affairs of Bishops and Regulars, His Holiness by the terms of the present decree approves and confirms the institute mentioned, of the Little Sisters of the Poor, as a congregation with simple vows, subject to the jurisdiction of the Ordinaries according to the Holy Canons, remitting to another time the approval of the constitutions, as well as the examination of the article concerning the office of Moderator-General—and the decision as to whether it ought to be suppressed or not. However, meanwhile the priest, Le Pailleur, will remain in the exercise of his charge as promoter of the institute, during the good pleasure of the Holy See.

"Let the Little Sisters of the Poor then, recommended by the public testimony of the Apostolic See, give themselves with new ardour to their works of mercy towards the poor, in order that they may merit to hear the Divine Spouse say on the day of His coming: 'What you have done to the least of My little ones, you have done to Me.'

"Given in Rome in the Holy Congregation of Bishops and Regulars the ninth day of July, 1854.

"J. CARDINAL DELLA GENGA, *Prefect.*
"A. BIZARRI, *Secretary.*"

"The Little Family," then in its fifteenth year, saw its existence recognized and consecrated by the

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"Datum Romæ ex Sacra Congregatione Episcoporum ac Regularium die Julii 9, 1854.

"J. CARD. DE GENGA, *Præf.*
"A. BIZARRI, *Secr.*"

supreme government of the Church. It was raised to the dignity of the religious congregations approved by the Holy Apostolic See. This was, for the first Little Sisters of the Poor, the most desired reward for their hard labours and unswerving faith. In the thirty-six houses hearts were overwhelmed with joy, and the old people understood that the Church, in adopting the hospitaller work, became their Mother in a special manner.

"Now that it is placed on the rock of Peter," a Roman canonist wrote to them, "the edifice will succeed in forming itself with the detached stones which you will receive from Rome." In this sense the approbation of the institute had, as its immediate consequence, the addition to the rule of the ordinary prescriptions of canonical right, conformably to the counsels of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. The constitutions in effect specified that the congregation was governed by a Mother-General, with the assistance of a General Council, and that the Mother-Assistants formed but one moral person with her; that the Superiors were elected for a period of six years in the general chapter of the congregation, held under the presidency of an apostolic delegate; that the institute itself was connected directly with the Holy Apostolic See, but was placed under the jurisdiction of the Bishops in what concerns worship and the Sacraments, the canonical examination preliminary to the clothing and profession of subjects, and other prescriptions of the holy canons.

Such was the legislative and administrative form

of the congregation and its control in the spiritual ecclesiastical order. By way of application, the administration of the mother-house and novitiate was separated from the administration of the house for the poor; then the mother-house was organized apart with its staff and exercises, the novitiate was to last one year, which the novices were to spend entirely at the house of the novitiate. It was regulated that the novices should be dressed like the Sisters, with the exception of the scapular, and that the headband should not entirely cover the hair. As to the ceremony of profession, which includes the taking of the first vows, it was always to be made in the novitiate according to the adopted rite.

These quotations, completing what we have said about the primitive regulation and the gradual developments of the rule, show how the inner life of the congregation was constituted, fortified, and perfected in order to work out an intense life of charity in the world. The approbation gave it that common basis of religious life which the religious orders derive from the Church, while each retains its own proper character, as the engrafted branch develops the natural energy of the plant and enables it to produce excellent fruits.

CHAPTER IX

THE APPROBATION OF ROME—LA TOUR SAINT-JOSEPH

The London foundation—A sacerdotal helper—Financial state of the hospitaller family—The congregation approved—Acquisition of La Tour Saint-Joseph.

THE approbation of the institute, so desirable in itself, was the occasion of a heavy trial. It will be remembered on what special terms the first houses had been founded, and what a mixture of natural fragility and moral strength the work of the Sisters manifested. The foundation in London had been formed in the ordinary way, had been made by novices who had simply passed six months in the congregation, and had then become Superiors. At the end of the year following their clothing, they had been permitted to make their vows in London; in the same way, the English postulants had been allowed to take the habit there, so that in reality the distant house had acquired a sort of autonomy or independence. The approbation of the congregation had several consequences, one of which was that the London house fell under the common administration. The Superiors-General met with a double opposition. On the one hand, the Sisters and novices of this house put forward, on August 9, 1854, the claim to form a self-governing branch of the Little Sisters of the Poor for the use of the

countries where the English language is spoken; on the other hand, the diocesan authority pronounced in favour of the continuation of the existing state of things, for fear of seeing the establishment, the object of so many sacrifices, fall to the disedification of Protestants. The affair passed through different phases, having for object the safe-guarding of acquired rights and reciprocal interests, and the matter was at last deferred to Rome on the ground that the said house formed part of the thirty-six establishments included in the sentence of approbation, having received a letter of approbation from the Ordinary of the diocese. It came to an end in 1861, and we will return to it at that date.

At the beginning of June, 1855, the congregation gained a distinguished fellow-labourer in the person of the Abbé Ernest Lelièvre, whose name is indissolubly connected with the hospitaller institution. Born at Valenciennes on April 13, 1826, related to rich industrial families in the North, a friend of Louis Veuillot, who had made known to him the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor, this young priest, immediately after his ordination, placed at the service of the hospitaller family both his knowledge as doctor of law and of theology, his large fortune and his administrative power. This good priest, with the permission and full approbation of the Bishop of Rennes, rendered the association valuable services, which were the more necessary as the development of the work was so rapid. The Rev. Lelièvre gave his assistance first in an im-

portant affair—the legal recognition of the congregation in France.

This question was then being studied, and the time had come to decide under what system the congregation should exercise the right of ownership over the estates indispensable for its charities. That step was not taken without some hesitation. At Laval particularly, the foundation had been made in a building belonging to the hospitals; at Mans (April 10, 1854) the foundation was also the result of an arrangement with the municipality, which reserved to itself certain territorial rights based on the original legacy; at Rennes the establishment of the Little Sisters at La Piletière was under an agreement which reserved a certain number of places for the poor sent there by the town, on condition of a certain payment. The various conditions were foreign to the spirit of the society, and they show clearly the anxieties which the Sisters had concerning their course of action and the experiments to which in all prudence they had resorted; but on the whole, the hospitaller association tended more and more towards independent administration and private property. That also renders it more touching and more human in its evolution as it pressed on towards its ideal. We shall soon see how this difficulty was solved.

On February 14, 1855, the Superior-General addressed a petition to the Minister of the Interior, in which she solicited "an Imperial Order authorizing legally the institution of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and giving it a right to civil life." An

influential well-wisher served to introduce the cause, as is stated in this communication from the Secretary of Commands of the Empress Eugénie, dated May 1, 1855. "Her Majesty has been pleased to recommend your request to the Minister of the Interior personally, and I have the honour to inform you that I have just transmitted it to his Excellency, by order of the Empress."

The affair had entered into the circle of administration. In the month of February, the Préfet of Ille-et-Vilaine had asked the Mother-Superior for "the statutes of your congregation approved by Mgr. the Bishop of Rennes, and the account of the assets and debits of your mother-house." In the following May, he wrote to the Bishop of Rennes: "I will assist you with all my power, my lord, to secure the success of such an interesting affair; but to prevent all difficulties, I am obliged to return to you the account of assets and debits of the community of the Little Sisters, begging you to remark that the assets do not present any income for the food and maintenance of the Sisters and the expense of keeping up the building, etc. The debit figures only state the sums due for the acquisition of estates, and no mention is made of ordinary and extraordinary expenses. The Council of State will no doubt wish to estimate whether the community possesses sufficient income, to face all the obligatory expenses."

In the objection thus raised, the civil Administration touched the vital question and the peculiar character of the work, and from this point of view

the quotation which precedes is a document of primary value. The following note, drawn up by the Secretary-General, Sister Xavier Joseph, gives the answer which applies to cases of the kind: "The assets of the Little Sisters present no income to serve for the food and maintenance of the Sisters. None can be presented, because there is none. The Sisters in every establishment, where they are more or less in number according to the number of old people, are nourished, like these old people, from the collections and leavings. As to their clothing, it equally comes from donations; often a benefactor gives a piece of stuff, and sometimes even her own garments. The novitiate offers some exceptions to what is said above. The subjects being there for their training, and in greater number than in the other houses, it would not be just that they should profit from the help of charity, which would be too great a burden on the town where the novitiate was placed. So every subject admitted contributes to her own expenses by bringing a dowry, greater or smaller, according to the position of her family. It is equally impossible for the assets of the Little Sisters to present any income from the maintenance of the houses. For that maintenance every easy piece of work is done by the healthy old men, who employ themselves according to their respective crafts; the more considerable works beyond the strength of the old men are done by workmen, either paid with money coming from public charity or hired by the benefactors themselves, who sometimes undertake such or such repairs, and even supply the materials

for them. In the debits of the Little Sisters there is no mention of daily expenses, because they are covered day by day by means of alms and collections. These expenses are often very small, because in certain localities the gifts of Nature are very plentiful. In this nothing can be fixed."

The account of assets and debits of the thirty-six houses included: 1. The mother-house at Rennes, estates and buildings, 230,000 francs; furniture, 30,000 francs, of which they still owed 80,000 francs. 2. The house at Saint-Servan, 40,000 francs; furniture, 10,000 francs. 3. The house at Dinan, 40,000 francs; furniture, 4,000 francs; remaining debt, 1,900 francs; and so forth. The congregation held seventeen establishments on hire, of which the furniture was valued at 142,000 francs. The total assets came to 1,417,000 francs, and the total debit to 443,400 francs. This account bore the inscription, "Drawn up in the council meeting at Rennes, February 14, 1855," and it bore the signature, "Sister Marie-Augustine, Superior-General."

Such was the patrimony of the work for the aged, who were at that time 4,000 in number. Formed by the personal properties of the members of the congregation and donations of different benefactors, it was encumbered with expense of maintenance and taxes, and yet possessed no settled income.

Whilst the French Government was examining this situation, the congregation was preoccupied with the consequences of the approbation. On the one hand, there was an advantage in having civil personality, which gave a right to possess legally and enabled

them to receive legacies. On the other hand, they held to the preservation of their liberty of administration, free from dependence on civil commissions, because otherwise the work would perish or fall into the category of congregations placed at the service of public administrations. They wished, before definitely engaging themselves, to be certain that the work would keep its indispensable mode of existence—which was its very essence. The Rev. Lelièvre employed himself in Paris in elucidating these questions to the complete satisfaction of the Little Sisters of the Poor, as is shown in his report of October 21, 1855.

A letter written afterwards by M. A. de Taillandier, formerly Sub-Director at the office of the Minister of Worship, contributes a piece of information worth recording: "I had had the pleasure of co-operating with your very reverend Mother at the foundation of your congregation so admirable for abnegation and devotedness, in showing to her the approved statutes likely to be the most useful for her work, and in preparing at the office of the Minister of Worship the report and the decree of legal recognition."

Here are the terms of the official document:

"DECREE.

"Napoleon, by the grace of God and the national will, Emperor of the French,

"To all present and future: Greetings!

"On the report of our Minister of Public Instruction and Worship;

"Given the opinions of the Bishop of Rennes and of the Prefect of Ille-et-Vilaine, dated May 15, June 13, and October 26, 1855;

"Given the opinion of our Minister of the Interior, dated May 14, 1855; the law of May 24, 1825; and the decree of January 31, 1852;

"Our Council of State having been consulted.

"We have decreed and decree that which follows:

"First article.—The religious association of the Little Sisters of the Poor, established at Rennes, is authorized as a congregation directed by a Mother-Superior-General, on condition that the members of this establishment conform themselves exactly to the statutes approved by royal ordinance of June 8, 1828, for the congregation of the Sisters of Charity in Strasburg, and which this association has declared that it adopts.

"Article 2.—Our Minister of Public Instruction and Worship and our Minister of the Interior are charged, each in his department, with the execution of the present decree, which shall be inserted in the Bulletin of Laws.

"Given at the Palace of the Tuilleries, January 9, 1856.

"Signed: NAPOLEON.

"By the Emperor, the Minister of Public Instruction and worship: H. FORTOUL.

"A true copy: The Councillor of State, Director-General of the Administration of Worship: DE CONTENSIN."

Thus the hospitaller congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor, well rooted in the soil of France and approved by the Church, took its definite place in society. It succeeded in organizing the service of infirm and indigent old age, and in virtue of this it was recognized by public authority, when it had not yet forty establishments and was only in the seventeenth year of its existence.

The organization of the mother-house and of the novitiate gave rise at the same time to a very important question—where to place them. The house at Rennes, with its 300 poor, its ground confined between the high road and the river, scarcely allowed the Sisters to raise there a second important establishment and to secure solitude and quietness for the novitiate. They sought in vain for a piece of ground; they tried to build on the ground opposite, but only met with opposition; and meanwhile the number of postulants was increasing. In these perplexities, they resolved to submit the case to the diocesan authority, and to abide by his decision. Monsieur Combes, Vicar-General, replied: "Do not build at Rennes: your piece of ground is too small, and, above all, your novices are too much occupied with the poor in that large home, and are not sufficiently secluded. Choose, if possible, a large piece of ground in a small parish. There you will be surrounded by the good people of the country; you will enjoy tranquillity and solitude." They saw in this counsel the expression of the Divine Will.

Then Abbé Genée, Superior of the missionaries of

the diocese,* pointed out an estate called "La Tour," situated in the parish of Saint-Pern. The Superiors-General of the congregation visited it, and the property pleased everybody; they joyfully looked forward to acquiring it, and this contentment seemed to them an indication of the Divine Will.

There was plenty of water and wood, a fine quarry of stones for building, as well as sand, a large piece of ground, and pleasant scenery. The distance from Rennes seemed an obstacle, but the proximity of the little town of Bécherel lessened the difficulty. The parish of Saint-Pern was very religious, and the Curé, Monsieur Margue, who employed himself actively in the purchase, said: "If a single person in my parish did not perform his Easter duties, people would point their finger at him." The proprietors, Monsieur and Mademoiselle Guimberteau, had decided to sell the property. On January 30, 1856, the contract was made in correct and due form. The price was 212,000 francs, and on April 1, 1856, three Little Sisters of the Poor took possession. By a happy coincidence, the Feast of Saint Joseph, falling that year in Holy Week, had been transferred to April 1. It was under the auspices of their patron Saint that the Little Sisters took possession of the estate of La Tour, now become "La Tour Saint-Joseph" (the Tower of Saint Joseph).

* Mentioned on p. 73.

CHAPTER X

THE HOSPITALLER CHARITY

A charity committee—A gallery of pictures—A lodge of Freemasons—A procession of our Lady—Midnight Mass—The mother-house.

We have entered on the period of great development of the hospitaller institution. In six years we count twenty-six new establishments—Orleans, in 1855; Caen, Saint-Etienne, Perpignan, Louvain, Montpellier, in 1856; Jemappes, Agen, Poitiers, in 1857; Saint-Quentin, Lisieux, Annonay, in 1858; Amiens, Roanne, in 1859; Valenciennes, Grenoble, Draguignan, Châteauroux, Roubaix, Boulogne, in 1860; Dieppe, Béziers, Clermont-Ferrand, Geneva, second house of Lyons, Metz, in 1861. Every one of these houses would deserve a special notice, but the similarity of the work in the different places would involve continual repetition. We must be content with episodes which, standing out on the great lines of the history of the society, illustrate and complete it.

The house at Nancy had had the good fortune to obtain a committee of gentlemen, including the Bishop, the President of the Israelite Consistory, the director of the journal *L'Esperance*, etc. In their appeal to the public, these gentlemen said: "Everyone knows this work, which realizes one of the highest and most useful conceptions of the charity

of the nineteenth century. Faithful to its origin, our little foundation had the most humble beginnings; it remained for some time, so to say, ignored in a house in the suburb Saint-Pierre, receiving poor old forlorn women, who suffered from all the privations of misery. God soon blessed the efforts of the Little Sisters and allowed their succour to extend itself; and on April 1 they entered the house in the Rue Mably which they now occupy. There the work was manifestly increased; men were received, and our town could appreciate the immense benefit of our institution. Little by little people saw our squares and streets relieved of those unfortunate beings, who are a prey to the sufferings of old age and misery; and it was not without emotion that, in visiting the home, one observed the happy transformation which has been effected in them." The appeal was listened to. The subscription made in these circumstances permitted the purchase of a piece of ground and the commencement of the construction of the actual establishment.

At Nantes the home developed in the same manner, not by the action of a committee, but through the admirable act of a single man. Monsieur Urvoy, of Saint-Bedan, had made a magnificent gallery of pictures, and gave it to the town on condition that the town would construct for the Little Sisters of the Poor an establishment capable of accommodating 160 old people. The paintings became the glory of the museum at Nantes, and this good work has succoured hundreds of poor people.

The Little Sisters had been two years at Bolbec

when a very singular opportunity to enlarge their home presented itself. The society of Freemasons in that place being broken up, the lodge became useless and was put up for sale. It appeared that several of the members appreciated the work done for the old people. When they knew that the negotiations were for the home, they favoured the sale at a moderate price. A better philanthropy succeeded to the old one, and seventy old people were soon passing happy days there.

The foundation at Orleans (April 11, 1855) was remarkable for the fact that the Little Sisters who composed it were all professed, a thing which had not happened before. Mgr. Dupanloup was the protector. Scarcely had he entered Orleans when he went to the home of the Little Sisters of the Poor, who had arrived a fortnight earlier, carefully examined the apartments and old people, noted all that was lacking, and the following day at high Mass he made it the subject of his sermon, and interested all his hearers in the new work. A month later he assigned to the Little Sisters a share in the profits of the festivities of Jeanne d'Arc, as though to associate the French heroine with her young sisters in charity.

At Perpignan, Mgr. Gerbet, who had received a beautiful statue of our Lady, at the time of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, decided to give it to the hospice, and to organize, for the occasion, a solemn procession which would mark the opening of the home for the aged. On Sunday, December 7, 1856, the pro-

cession issued from the cathedral, including the authorities and more than 800 persons bearing candles, whilst the Little Sisters escorted the statue of the Immaculate Virgin. Arrived at the house, the assembly formed into a group on the surrounding ground to hear the discourse of the learned prelate, and to associate themselves heartily with the benediction of the new charitable establishment.

Abbé Hamon has related the origin of the fourth house in Paris: "From the first years of my ministry in the parish of Saint-Sulpice I wished for a house of the Little Sisters. I used to see these angels of charity accost poor old people forsaken in the street, or trembling in a cold attic, from which, moreover, the unmerciful landlord wished to drive them away, and say to them with maternal tenderness: 'Come to us. We will receive you. We will put at your service our arms and our feet, our health and our life. We will beg for you from house to house for the leavings of the rich which your age no longer permits you to go and beg for yourselves.' And on this kind invitation I used to see them accept—these men who were on the point of cursing life at the moment of quitting it, and these honest workmen, low of station but noble-hearted, who had spent all for their families, without putting aside anything for their old age. There, at least, freed from care, they tasted in peace the greatest happiness they could hope for here below, and prepared for themselves, by a Christian life, still greater happiness through eternity.

"One evening, coming out of church, a venerable

lady came up to me and confided to me that she kept at my disposal, to found a house for the Little Sisters of the Poor, a sum of 20,000 francs, the fruit of her savings during the twenty years of her widowhood. The following Sunday I announced this fact to my parishioners, and the next day another lady came and gave me 10,000 francs for the same work. Raising my eyes to heaven, I said: 'O God, Father of the poor, I recognise and adore Thy design.' I immediately bought a large house and garden, and soon installed there twelve poor people under the maternal direction of the Little Sisters. The Sisters, when once on the spot, turned the rooms and closets, including the attics, into dormitories and wards. In proportion as the space was increased, the poor flocked in, and room was founded for 114. The Apostolic Nuncio blessed the home, and Father de Ravignan, the celebrated preacher at Nôtre Dame, preached."

Mr. de Falloux has related, in the Life of Augustin Cochin, the transfer of the second house in Paris, which had to be pulled down in view of certain public works for beautifying the capital: "The Little Sisters had no lease at all. They received a year's notice to transport elsewhere 108 old persons whom they had taken charge of. Mr. Cochin, having been informed, as Mayor—and, above all, as a friend—communicated promptly with the Council of Hospitals to obtain either a lease or a longer delay. They replied that the general interest must prevail over a particular interest, and that public charity could not neglect to draw benefit from its property. Mr. Cochin was foiled with his own weapons. He

felt it, and began at once to search for other quarters, but no one was willing to share his house with such burdensome lodgers, and the rent of buildings large enough to lodge so many people amounted to at least 30,000 francs a year. Discouragement was beginning to show itself when the Sister-Superior came to see Mr. Cochin to relate the following story:

"'A gentleman whose name I do not know, but whom I see often assisting at Mass in the chapel, has just said to me: "My good Mother, you are looking for a house to shelter your old people? I have myself been occupied in that search, but we shall not succeed in it. You must buy a piece of ground and build a home there yourself." "The advice is excellent, but to buy and to build one must have money, and we have none." "God will supply that," replied the stranger. "Let us first occupy ourselves about the site. I have found a very large piece of ground, well situated in the Avenue de Breteuil, at the price of 15 francs the square metre. It is an opportunity which will not recur. In a year's time, perhaps in a month, this ground will be worth 40 or 50 francs. Negotiate, therefore, immediately and for the payment of immediate expenses I place 30,000 francs at your disposal."'"

The generous benefactor was Mr. Chartier. Mr. Cochin, on his part, put himself at the head of a subscription, which produced 150,000 francs. The building was raised, and on February 2, 1858, the new establishment was inaugurated. The officers of the National Guard adorned the avenue and the

entrance with flags. The Mayor "gave a discourse which deeply moved a numerous and brilliant audience," and Cardinal Morlot pronounced the benediction. In the end the National Guard disappeared, with the political circumstances which had called it into existence, and the establishment became an ordinary home for the aged.

It was a Russian general who endowed the town of Grenoble with an establishment of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Mr. de Yermoloff procured the property of La Tronche; chose Saint Michael, his patron Saint, as titular Saint of the home; gave the Sisters their first cow, and a horse and cart for the begging Sisters. More than once, he came to serve the poor old people and receive Communion with them in the humble chapel. This chapel had been arranged at the expense of the Fathers of the Grande Chartreuse: it was their first gift of charity to the home for the aged, but not their last. As to the cow, after having considered where they could get forage, they thought of the grass which was growing in the fortifications, and made a request to the officer commanding the place. He consented, and in his reply quoted a biblical incident: "I hasten to give orders that the Little Sisters of the Poor may glean for the interesting nurse of their old people. We are all disposed to be as benevolent towards them as Booz was towards the daughter of Naomi."

Let us pass now to the foundations in Strasbourg and Metz. Each had its episode. The foundation

at Strasbourg, made in January, 1856, was much like the first foundations: it started in a small way, and the public kitchen for the poor supplied the first meals. However, a little wood, bread, linen, and oil arrived every day, sufficient for their needs. Thus, whenever they received a new inmate at the home, the Little Sisters received a loaf, and once when they received two poor people on one day they received two loaves on that day. "Was that not to assure Thy earthly children, O Heavenly Father, that Thy providence allied itself with their charity?" When they had admitted a certain number of women they wished to receive some men, but the hospice was so poor at the moment that they wished at the same time to have some supernatural motive for confidence. The Little Sisters confided the affair to Saint Joseph, asking him that the first old man might be called Joseph. This was, in the idea of the simple and confident Little Sisters, at once a sentiment of piety with regard to the Holy Protector and an appeal to His intervention under a more perceptible form.

Now, the Préfet's wife was greatly interested in an old blind man, whose children, very poor themselves, took him in turns to their table and hearth. This time it was the turn of the poorest, a household burdened with a family. The lady had pity on them, and came to propose her poor blind man, who thus became the first man admitted. He was a German, and it happened that the Sisters who spoke German were occupied out of doors, so the others awaited their return and the coming of the

evening recreation to put the question they had so much at heart. He replied: "My name is Joseph." This was a great joy, and the Little Sisters saw in the happy coincidence the assurance that the co-operation of the Holy Protector would not fail them.

The old men increased rapidly in number, but they had a great anxiety: How would they be buried? Will it be as in a hospital, without coffin? They discussed the matter secretly amongst themselves, and half wished to see one of them die. A good old woman, who had been well prepared for a Christian death, was the first to die. The parish priest of Saint-John performed the burial ceremony himself. The old men, accompanied by two Little Sisters, formed the funeral procession. There was a coffin and a pall. When they returned from the cemetery the old men said to one another: "Now we can die in peace. They will bury us well, and they will pray for us."

It was on December 24, in the evening, at Metz. Two good women came to the house of Mrs. de Briey, where the Little Sisters of the foundation were; and they all took a meal together before going to the home which they were about to open. The Countess placed the two first poor people at the table one at each side, and served them as she would have served our Lord. Then she led one of the women by the arm all along the way; and as it was very cold, she carried her kindness so far as to cover her with her own mantle. The first part of the night was spent in preparing the chapel, whilst the two

poor women waited for midnight Mass in the corner of the fireplace, with a happiness born of physical and moral well-being. At the appointed hour, Father de Franciosi arrived, accompanied by a young Father, to serve his Mass. Midnight struck, and the priest mounted the altar. After the Gospel he congratulated the Little Sisters of the Poor on beginning their work of charity on such a night, saying that nobody at Metz had so much right as they had to celebrate the birth of the Saviour, because that home was truly Bethlehem in its destitution. Then he encouraged the Sisters to follow Jesus Christ in the exercise of the holy vocation. Then he offered up the Holy Sacrifice for the newly-founded home, and they united themselves to our Lord in Holy Communion. That was a most beautiful night, full of spiritual consolations and memories of the first Christmas.

On Christmas night, at Amiens, in 1855, Mr. Louis Marcot read some articles concerning the Little Sisters. A vivid impression was made on his mind and heart, and, the idea of Christmas being combined with it, the Little Sisters of the Poor appeared to him an ideal of Catholic charity. He made his sister, Mrs. Ledieu, a partaker of his sentiments and his enthusiasm. The seed was sown in the earth; in the shade, its mysterious roots grew. At last, in 1858, he left for Switzerland, on the advice of the doctors, and at Lyons, on the way, he went to pray at Nôtre Dame de Fourvières. "On Wednesday, July 21," he tells us, "I assisted at Mass in the celebrated sanctuary of Lyons, and there made my

Communion, asking of God through the intercession of our Lady the improvement of my health, and promising to employ myself—my person, my power, and my property—in the foundation and service of a house for the Little Sisters of the Poor at Amiens." On the following 31st of March the said foundation was made; but the promise went even further, and gave to the hospitaller family one of its most devoted and charitable friends.

These narratives prove that the friends of the unfortunate appreciated this new form of benevolence. One thought was in every spirit and all hearts: to multiply the homes for the aged, still so few in number, and to endow the country with a work of charity of which the physical and moral benefit was indisputable. Some were drawn to it by religious principles, for the cause of the poor is dear to all who have the spirit of the Gospel, and Charity is the daughter of Faith; others were drawn to it by humanitarian ideas, because the simple sight of this union of decrepit old people excited their pity and commiseration. Either way, while the plaintive old people came knocking at the door of the Little Sisters, telling their stories and revealing their lamentable miseries, the Little Sisters went to knock at the door of the rich, and with the superfluities of the one nourished the poverty of the other.

The word of the Master to His disciples in the Gospel resounded in their compassionate hearts: "Gather up the fragments that are left, for fear that they should perish"; and they went, obedient and

gentle, to gather the remains from tables and festivals there where the crowd passed by, there where the multitude sated themselves. Like our Saviour, they lived surrounded by the blind, deaf, dumb, lame, paralytic, every kind of debility and infirmity, and they had pity on the poor. That involved sacrifice. The Bishop of Soissons, having visited the house of the Little Sisters at Saint-Quentin, recalled the kind of garret which served as a dormitory for the Sisters. Cardinald Bonald, having seen the place where the Little Sisters at Saint-Etienne slept, refused to bless the oratory where they hoped to keep the Blessed Sacrament, and obliged the Sisters to sleep there. Afterwards, as they slept on the floor on straw mattresses, he had a bed bought for each religious at his own expense. Thus in the foundations, the Sisters forgot themselves in order to provide for the poor: the old people had the best places, and their servants took refuge under the roof. It was admirable, but such installation was prejudicial to the health of the Sisters.

In Brittany the undertaking to establish the mother-house was successful. The old manor residence of La Tour had not sufficed to lodge the general governing staff of the congregation and twenty-seven novices, so the old stables were pulled down and replaced by a very simple building, which was erected in two months, and permitted the addition of some novices who arrived in April and some postulants who entered in June, 1856. Still

more was done. As the time had come to hold the General Chapter of the institution, the forty-one "good Mothers" of the existing houses assembled there, in obedience to the constitutions and to assist, in the name of their Sisters, at the ceremony of inaugurating La Tour Saint-Joseph, which replaced the house at Rennes, now quite insufficient for its purpose. On July 25, 1856, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood visited the property with the Bishop of Rennes, as all wished to witness the first profession and the solemn blessing of the home. The ceremony took place in the afternoon, in the spacious avenue dividing a pine-wood which faced the old castle, and twenty-three novices made their profession. Mgr. Saint Marc, in pontifical vestments, went up to the entrance of the community-house, and blessed this dwelling, destined to be the centre of the institution, of which everything presaged the increasing importance.

Time passed. They had no intention of building the present novitiate, but the increasing number of postulants and the obligation they were under to use the house at Rennes for some of the novices made them think of it. Providence supplied them with some funds, and in these circumstances the Rev. Lelièvre was of great assistance in bringing the responsibility before the public and procuring the necessary advances. Then the Superiors-General sent for Mr. Mellet, an architect, who prepared the plans as they desired in anticipation of future developments. They decided to place the novitiate on the spot where the pine-wood grew. The Little

Sisters helped the workmen, and soon the trees were cut down, the roots extracted, the branches and trunks carried away. At certain hours there was a swarm of workwomen, and from wood-cutters they became diggers. It was thought useful to exercise the subjects in manual labour during the period of the novitiate, in order to fit their bodies for future fatigues of tending the poor and for other acts of devotedness. In this, according to the rule, moderation and just limits are observed. The superior place is given, as it should be, to spiritual training and instruction.

On March 20, 1857, Mgr. Manpoint, Bishop of Reunion (Africa)* came to preside at the ceremony of laying the foundation-stone of the novitiate, in the midst of happy and pious rejoicings. Then were opened quarries of granite, stone, and sand. The noise of mining and the blows of iron instruments were heard. Men were busy transporting the trees cut down on the property or brought from elsewhere; and the country workmen, who passed in squads morning and evening along all the roads of the neighbourhood, pressed forward with the work and raised the building.

At the same time the cultivation of the spacious property was begun. Two small ponds were drained, and gave place to a verdant valley. About the time when the Sisters had left Rennes, Julian and John Liéron, brothers of two of the Little Sisters, had come from their village with their goods and their team to devote themselves to the service of the hos-

* Former Vicar-General of Rennes (p. 67).

pitaller family. These excellent labourers gave their services for the improvement of the grounds, and to their industry the good cultivation of the fields and meadows was due.

Towards the month of June, 1858, the Sisters began to inhabit the first part of the new edifice, and on July 4 a provisional chapel was set up there. Two good priests, Abbé Ambrose Valin and the Abbé Pieter Roche, consecrated their ministry to the spiritual welfare of the hospitaller family. On the other hand, the movement of vocations and the increasing number of foundations, necessitated a continuous development of the establishment of La Tour Saint-Joseph. The main body of the novitiate was raised and finished; the large irregular field which spread out in front was dug up, and gave promise of a fine garden; the porter's lodge and the stables were duly erected; the walls enclosed the grounds, and formed an enclosure calculated to make La Tour a peaceful refuge. Two public roads which crossed the property were closed and two others others were built outside the walls, thanks to the kindness of the civil administration. It is admitted that a certain practical genius for organization presided over these undertakings, and that everything harmonized in one general plan.

The Little Sisters, novices and postulants, took part in this work in proportion to their strength, sometimes pushing the wheelbarrow and the little cart. From time to time they interrupted these rural occupations to devote themselves to prayer. In walking there it was not an uncommon thing to

meet one or other Sister at the foot of a tree reciting her office or rosary, making her examination of conscience, praying, as if she were alone in the world, in no way occupying herself with anything around her. Everyone admired this candour and simplicity.

In taking possession of La Tour, the Sisters did not dismiss the poor of the neighbourhood who were accustomed to present themselves there; they gave them money, bread or soup. At the time of the first Communion they dressed some poor children of the parish. These customs have not ceased. The Little Sisters of the Poor thus bestow some benefits on the neighbourhood.

CHAPTER XI

THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR IN BELGIUM

A subscription in Liège—The festival of the King—The University of Louvain—In the Borinage—The foundations in Bruges, Namur, Antwerp, Ostend—The donkey of the Little Sisters at Brussels.

THE hospitaller work had powerful protectors in Belgium. The foundation at Liège had taken place on June 13, 1853, as the result of circumstances which we have related;* a subscription containing the names of the principal families of the locality had at once paid for the property, and at a single stroke placed the home for the aged on the road to prosperity. In May, 1857, the Assistant-General returned to make the visitation. "She blessed God on seeing all that had been accomplished since the foundation. She found the building finished, the debts paid, the poor happy, and the Little Sisters fervent."

At Brussels they had opened the home on April 1, 1854, in an old barrack put at the disposal of the Little Sisters by the Burgomaster.† It was the ladies of the town who made its removal possible by raising a subscription which reached to 30,000 francs, and by finding a piece of ground in the Rue Haute; but as the price mounted to 108,000 francs they

* Chap. VII. † *Ibid.*

started a lottery, with municipal authorization, and covered the expenses. The taking of possession was a most brilliant function. The nation had just celebrated the King's twenty-fifth anniversary, and there had been a banquet in the hall of the representatives; but the royal festival was finished in the home under the presidency of their Highnesses the Duchess of Brabant and the Princess Charlotte, accompanied by the high society which the recent ceremony had assembled around the Sovereign. Accordingly, on July 24, 1856, after a Mass of inauguration celebrated in the modest chapel of the new establishment, these persons of high rank went to the halls and infirmaries, and distributed the remains of the royal feast to the poor old people themselves. What a touching sight, the high ones of the world mixing with the lowly ones, of whom several had been the outcasts of society! Social authority and religion covered all with their august protection, and the humble Little Sisters, agents of Providence, accomplished their mission of charity in the midst of this assembly.

On December 13, 1856, the foundation at Louvain took place at the request of Rev. Craessearts, Dean of Saint Nicolas, and Monsieur Moeller, Professor at the University. The house was lent gratuitously for six years, and the civil authorities favoured the little establishment. The celebrated University was a resource—thus, the students paid for a donkey to go for provisions—but, in return, the Little Sisters taught their lesson of charity, at the same time as lessons in earthly science were given.

The foundation at Jemappes was extremely laborious and on this account deserves special mention. The Count of Meüs thought of establishing a home for the Little Sisters of the Poor in the Borinage, in the midst of the coal country. They responded to his appeal by establishing themselves at Jemappes, not far from Mons, on April 23, 1857. The political-religious troubles of the time were very adverse to it at the beginning, and it took several years to win over public opinion. Later on all the working-class families, so numerous in the Borinage, had one of their members at the home for old people, and thus they came in contact with the charity of the Little Sisters; thus a cordial understanding was gradually established.

The first occasion of their presenting themselves in the borough of X . . . was on a market day. The Little Sisters, carrying a basket on their arms, were begging for their aged poor; the people were giving —one a cabbage, another some potatoes, and everything was gratefully received. But the spirit of evil was watching. They heard railleries and hooting, which they took calmly. At last the rural guard arrested the Little Sisters and brought them as offenders before the Commissary and Burgomaster, who prohibited gathering alms in the locality. The begging Sisters accepted this sentence with humility and submission, and went to seek their modest equipage; then, in order to practise abnegation and self-contempt, as their duty sometimes demanded, instead of getting into the carriage and going through byways, they walked on foot along the

main road and so lost none of the humiliations reserved for them. When they were out of the locality, they took their prayer-books and began to say their office; then they entered their house calm and resigned. The good Mother, Saint Jerome, and her companions shared the sentiments of the alms-gatherers, and all offered themselves to God, to sacrifice themselves rather than abandon the cause of the poor old people. There was here a force of virtue which necessarily worked good for the home.

An attempt was made in the borough of X . . . The Little Sisters took counsel with the clergy, who did not give them much hope of obtaining municipal authorization. In fact, it was not long before the Commissary of Police and a Sheriff appeared, and notified to them in a very peremptory tone the order to withdraw. Moreover, these gentlemen, to assure themselves, no doubt, of the submission of the two Sisters, did them the honour of accompanying them, escorted by a curious crowd, to the limit of the territory. All these attempts miscarried one after the other, and, to complete the misfortune, the municipality of Jemappes, obedient to sectarian influences, withdrew the authorization previously accorded. The congregation began to fear the foundation would fall through.

It is true that the work was not known in the locality, and that the feeble commencement of the home, with its few poor women, did not suffice to give an adequate idea of it. In January, 1858, there was a little more room, and they began to receive

the old men. Two former coal-men—one eighty-six years old, and abandoned by his children; the other seventy years old, infirm, and a drunkard—were the first men received; but in time others came, and the home began to be of some importance in the eyes of the people. To obtain sufficient resources the Sisters had recourse to an expedient which was successful: they printed and distributed cards bearing this inscription: "The Little Sisters of the Poor at Jemappes will do me the pleasure to call at my house." [Here followed the address, date, and signature.] In this way they penetrated into the town of Mons and several places. Things began to change. Then our Little Sisters began to make plans and to dream (as it is natural to the Little Sisters) of much distress relieved; for they were touched by the great misery, both physical and moral, of the old workmen of the coal-mines, and amongst those who were at the home, they obtained real conversions. The supreme trial came to them from the families whom they were assisting; indeed, more than once the unnatural children of the old men began to throw stones at the Little Sisters, punishing them, as it were, for having more heart than they had themselves. The Sisters did what the good Saint Francis had done of old: they set themselves to pick up the stones thrown at them to make the foundation, as they said. This was the end; soon the moral victory was complete, and the home prosperous. A few more years and it became popular.

We count four new foundations—Bruges, in 1862;

Namur and Antwerp, in 1863; Ostend, in 1896. This brings up the number of establishments to eight. "On February 8, 1862," says a note of the Little Sisters, "we arrived in Bruges. We went to our home, which is not resplendent with luxury. As the snow was falling in large flakes, our first care was, with the help of a mason, to set up an old stove. The dinner hour approached. Everyone set her wits to work to prepare the meal: some dug up bricks in the yard and erected a scaffolding with them in the chimney; others fetching wood and coal. The fire was lighted, bread, butter, and potatoes are arranged on the table—that is to say, the floor. . . . The bell rang: six chairs were brought to us; a second stroke was heard: this time it was a complete dinner, with spoons, forks, and knives, which Providence sent us. Some time after, we received plates, dishes, candles, a basket of turnips, of which two were transformed into candlesticks." Those who gave these gifts were workwomen accustomed to hard times and rough seasons, and they bought at their own cost articles of the first necessity; for the poor instinctively understand the poor, and know what will give them relief. Dean Van Collie made himself responsible for the rent.

In Namur, the foundation was made under the form of a committee of patronage. It is known that many works of benevolence exist under this system, but such is not the genius of administration of the Little Sisters of the Poor. The result was a misunderstanding, which fettered the first establishment until the day, when a friendly decision was

come to on both sides—that the committee should occupy itself with the purchase of a piece of ground and a good commencement of building, whilst the Little Sisters should act according to their customs and traditions. The united effort rapidly put the home on a good footing, and the generosity of the inhabitants of Namur was true to itself. The brewers, butchers, merchants of all branches, let themselves be taxed for the aged poor of the locality.

Mrs. Teechman, wife of the Governor of Antwerp, took the initiative in the foundation, which was made in that town on September 15, 1863. It was a venerable religious, Father Hessels, Superior of the Jesuits, who erected the large and beautiful establishment in the Rue de Hollande, by means of a triple subscription which he started amongst the population. But, if it is just to attribute the leading part to him, it is not less exact that resources arrived in other ways through the Little Sisters. The home in Antwerp thus became, in time, one of the principal establishments of the hospitaller institutions.

The foundation at Ostend, demanded by the parish priest of Saint-Mary, took place on April 12, 1866. On that day itself were received four poor women, whose respective ages were seventy-two, seventy-four, eighty-three, and eighty-four—good old women and very unfortunate. Sympathy was at once aroused among the working-class. One day the Sisters went to the house of a shoemaker, the father of five children, who promised to give some loaves. This good man appeared to rejoice in seeing

his wife bring the first loaf to the Little Sisters, then his four sons came, each with a box of blacking, and the fifth, who was in the arms of the mother, carried a packet of salt. Mr. Van Iseghem, the Burgomaster, had himself made a list of the principal houses where the alms-gatherers could present themselves with advantage, and the King of the Belgians sent a gift of 600 francs.

This collection of anecdotes owes a paragraph to the donkey of the house at Brussels. It happened in July, 1861, that the donkey could not go well any longer, on account of its old age, and that the vehicle, drawn too slowly, could not get home by dinner-hour. At that time there was a begging Sister who was very simple, very obedient, full of the spirit of faith. The good Mother said to her: "Good Little Sister, go and beg, and do not come back without a little donkey or at least the promise of one." This injunction touched the Little Sister. She set off, having no particular person in view, but her usual confidence in her mission of charity left her no anxiety. On her way, she began to pray to Our Lady, and while she was praying the thought came to her to address herself to the King, who was at that time at the Palace of Läechen. Finding no means of addressing herself personally to His Majesty, she had recourse to a lady of the palace, who gave the message and obtained the desired favour. The King himself wrote to the proper officer, and the Little Sister went home joyful and content. A charming donkey arrived, as large as a pony, and they had

the satisfaction of seeing the collecting-cart come in every day in time for dinner.

Alas! in 1864, after some years of good service, the donkey given by the King died of scarlet fever. They addressed a request to the Duke of Arenberg. Some days after a gentleman whom no one knew presented himself. The Sister portress had seen this gentleman, who had brought several times gifts of money, but had not chosen to make himself known otherwise than by the phrase, "Pray for me. I am a savage." The good Mother arrives. The visitor says he is a dealer in animals, and, having heard that the Little Sisters of the Poor were in need of a donkey, he wished to sell them one. Looking at the personage and finding that he had not at all the air of such a calling, the good Mother ventures to say to him: "But have I not the honour to speak to the Prince of Arenberg?" He replies: "I tell you that I am a dealer in animals. Well, not exactly—but I sell donkeys." "Oh, my lord, you have probably got donkeys, but you do not sell them; you give them, and I hope that you will give us one." The discussion finished pleasantly with the gift of a fine donkey, for some days after, the good Prince, continuing his rôle, came himself, bringing one almost equal in value to a horse, such was its size. He put the harness and the shafts to the new animal, and arranged everything. The donkey did his part well, and shortened the time of the journeys by half.

Thus the branch in Belgium was ramifying and developing marvellously to shelter a great number

of old people. Like France, to whom she is half a sister as regards language, Belgium produced numerous and generous vocations. With her, too, charity is a power, and gives efficacious help in solving the social question, to the great benefit of poor old people, forsaken and infirm.

CHAPTER XII

THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR IN ENGLAND AND IN SCOTLAND

The decree of 1861—Foundations in London, Manchester, Bristol, Birmingham, Plymouth, Leeds, Newcastle, Glasgow, Dundee, Edinburgh—Letter of Propaganda.

THE position of the Little Sisters in London had undergone an eclipse, but in 1858 the affair had been entrusted to the Rev. Lelièvre, who was the providential man for the occasion, and consequently the apostle of the work in England. His representations at the Court of Rome resulted, in 1861, in the following decree:

"DECREE.*

"The Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars having examined the question which has arisen between, on the one side, the Superior-General

* "Decretum.—Perpensis ab hac Sacra Congregatione Episcoporum et Regularium quæ respiciunt quæstionem exortam ex una parte inter Moderatricem Generalem domumque principem piæ Congregationis Parvularum Sororum Pauperum in Diœcesi Rhedonen. erectæ, et decreto hujus Sacræ Congregationis diei 9 Julii 1854 approbatæ, et ex altera parte inter Sorores domus Londinensis, factoque relatione SS^mo D^no N^ro Pio Papæ Nono in Audientia habita ab infra D^no Secretario ejusdem S. Congregationis die 1^a Martii 1861, Sanctitas Sua Apostolica Auctoritate sequens Decretum edi mandavit: I. Reclamationes factæ a Sorori-

and the mother-house of the pious Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor established in the Diocese of Rennes, and approved by a decree of this Sacred Congregation, dated July 9, 1854, and on the other side the Sisters of the house in London, and a report thereon having been made to His Holiness our Holy Father the Pope Pius IX, in the audience given to Monsignor hereinafter named, Secretary of this Sacred Congregation, on March 1, 1861, His Holiness of his apostolic authority has ordered the following decree to be issued: I. The claims made by the London Sisters against the Superior-General and the mother-house are rejected. II. The house in London is not allowed to separate from the institution in France either to form a particular house or a distinct congregation. III. There-

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bus Londinensibus contra Moderatricem generalem domumque principem rejiciuntur. II. Minime permittendum est ut ab instituto Galliæ domus Londinensis separatur, neque uti domus particularis, neque ad efformandam distinctam Congregationem. III. Ideo sorores domus Londinensis infra duos menses sese subjicere debent Moderatrici Generali, seque iterum conjungere Congregationi Galliæ; secus eo ipso privatæ remaneant nomine et titulo Parvularum Sororum ac etiam Sororum Pauperum, habitu et mantello quo utuntur Sorores ejusdem Instituti, nec non quovis privilegio eidem Congregationi ab Apostolica Sede concesso, cum prohibitione etiam alias domos memorati instituti erigendi.—Datum ex Secretaria memoratæ Sacræ Congregationis Episcoporum et Regularium supra die et anno.

"N. Card. Paracciani Clarelli, *Præf.*

"A. Archiepiscopus Philippen., *Secr.*

"Romæ."

fore the Sisters of the house in London must within two months submit themselves to the Superior-General and unite themselves again to the French congregation; otherwise by the very fact of their not so doing, they will be deprived of the name and title of Little Sisters and Sisters of the Poor, of the habit and mantle which the Sisters of this institution use, and of every privilege whatever granted by the Apostolic See to the congregation itself, and will not be allowed to erect other houses of the said institution.—Given at the Secretary's office of the said Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars the day and year aforesaid.

"N. Card. Paracciani Clarelli, *Prefect.*

"A. Archbishop of Philippi, *Secretary.*

"Rome."

The decree of the Holy See applied to two establishments, because in the course of the year 1860 the said Sisters had commenced a second home in London in the diocese of Southwark. Mgr. Grant, Bishop of that Diocese, notified the decision to the establishment under his jurisdiction, and afterwards reported to the mother-house on July 8, 1861, in these terms: "Since they have read the decree of the Holy Father, they have expressed the most filial desire to be united to the Mother-General and to the Institution." Sister Honoria, who was the Superior, was maintained in charge, and the congregation regained possession of a house in London. The Archbishop of Westminster found a different situation and different dispositions in the old establishment

situated in his diocese, as is shown by a letter of Mgr. Howard to the Rev. Lelièvre*: "I have seen His Eminence Cardinal Wiseman; he has shown me the reply made by the Sisters of Hammersmith. They are very much pained not to be able to comply with the invitation of the Holy See and of His Eminence to join the mother-house, and consequently they submit themselves in all things to the alternative presented by the Holy See—that is to say, no longer to be able to bear the name nor the habit of the Little Sisters, and finally, not to be allowed to found another congregation of the same institution. They say that the decree does not affect their future position, that there remains to them full liberty to found another religious congregation." Such was the actual outcome of this affair; on either side the situation was providentially regulated on this new basis. As compensation, Cardinal Wiseman authorized the Little Sisters of the Poor to found a new house in the Diocese of Westminster, so that from 1861 the congregation had in London itself two establishments. The decree of the Holy See was the starting-point of foundations in England and Scotland — namely, Manchester, Glasgow, and Bristol in 1862, Dundee and Edinburgh in 1863, Birmingham in 1864, Plymouth and Leeds in 1865, Newcastle in 1866.

* Mgr. Howard, Mgr. Manning, Mgr. Monaco, afterwards Cardinals, had had the Rev. Lelièvre as a fellow-student at the Ecclesiastical Academy in Rome, and sent him their support in all this negotiation, as in several other circumstances.

To follow with due interest this development of the work, it is necessary to note: (1) That at the time of which we are speaking Protestantism was still in all its strength and mistress of the principal resources of the nation; (2) that the Catholic population of these great towns was for the most part in a state bordering on indigence; (3) that everywhere the aged Catholic poor were forced to seek refuge in those places which the Protestant parishes supported under the name of workhouses, where they were exposed to the danger of losing their faith or leaving off all its practices. Anyone placing himself in the midst of those historical times will understand why the Bishops, the Catholics, and persons of liberal mind, were so favourable to these foundations, and why the Propaganda in Rome so strongly supported and encouraged its negotiator. The history of the Little Sisters of the Poor offers no pages more beautiful: this period of their work even forms part of the history of the Church in England and in Scotland. The association of the Propagation of the Faith was not mistaken in regard to it, and for several years in succession sent certain contributions, well knowing that every religious work faithful to its higher object has an apostolic side, and serves in its manner to establish on earth the kingdom of God. Under this head we have to register two official documents: the one is the account sent to Rome in February, 1866, by the Rev. Lelièvre, the other is the reply to it by the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, dated May 1, 1866.

1. Report addressed to His Eminence the Cardinal Barnabò.

"It is necessary to refer to the foundation, which existed already in 1861, in the Diocese of Southwark. The unexpected development of this house invites us to do so. All that we then possessed, was a little hired house where eight Sisters sufficed with difficulty, or rather did not suffice, to nourish twenty-five old people. Things have much changed; for some French benefactors have come to our help, almost without our asking for it and through the mere thought of the good which would be done by the Little Sisters in the midst of Protestants. Mgr. Grant, whose zeal and constant work is well known, having the Sisters under his eyes and almost at his door, has powerfully contributed to sustain them. First, they hired the house adjoining the one they already inhabited, and the number of poor was brought up to sixty. The Sisters began to receive alms from Protestants. They then bought a sufficiently large piece of ground and built a house, which they have paid for entirely and which holds 130 poor comfortably. What is most surprising in this movement is the increasing sympathy of the Protestants. The Sisters, who when they started feared to show themselves in their habit in the streets, where the population is the least hostile, are now able to present themselves without difficulty even in the market-place, and publicly beg there for vegetables, meat, and fish. It is seldom that any offensive word even from a distance reaches the ears of the begging

Sisters. It is rare that those to whom they address themselves refuse them an alms. They take the precaution of carrying with them a printed form which makes their work known: this simple document suffices to touch the heart, and serves them as a passport. Not one of the many Protestants who have visited the establishment has left it without showing his satisfaction; and as to the poor who are admitted, one may say that it is enough for them to cross the threshold to become Catholic, if they are not so before. Sweet consolation for the Little Sisters, and one that repays them amply for all their sacrifices.

"As to the house which is established in the Diocese of Westminster, one may say that its foundation is due entirely to the decree given at Rome in March, 1861. His Eminence Cardinal Wiseman desired to show in a striking way, worthy of his great soul, the regret he felt at what had passed, presided in person at everything which concerned our foundation, deigned to visit the place which was to serve as a provisional dwelling, recommended the Sisters to all the faithful of the Diocese of Westminster, and, in spite of the grave malady with which he was already attacked, he came to give his blessing to the Sisters and the poor as soon as he knew that the first old people had found place under their roof. On our side, we have shown His Eminence a desire to which he had agreed—namely, to establish ourselves in the mission then directed by Mgr. Manning (who has become the successor of the Cardinal in the See of Westminster), who personally

had prepared our return, who knew and loved our houses in France, and whose very special benevolence seemed to be for our Sisters in a foreign land, and in face of difficulties easy to anticipate, the firmest support and the surest and most complete safeguard. All this confidence has in nowise deceived us. The house has grown, like the other one, in the same proportion, with a concurrence still more remarkable on the part of Catholics and Protestants. Amongst its inhabitants it counts to-day several old men who were octogenarians when the Little Sisters converted them, and who are for the old Catholics themselves a subject of edification. The buildings have been finished recently, and His Grace the Archbishop of Westminster blessed them himself when he returned from Rome. Addressing himself on that occasion to a numerous public, he said that one of his dearest hopes, and one of those which seemed to him the most surely founded, was to see a house of the Little Sisters in every town in England, Scotland, and Ireland.

"His Lordship the Bishop of Manchester had been the first to forestall this wish of the illustrious Archbishop. In the month of January, 1862, he called the Little Sisters to his episcopal town, where the cotton crisis had caused dreadful misery among the poor. He personally deigned to find a house for the Little Sisters which permitted them to begin the work, while waiting to find the permanent habitation. From him they received the first alms in money and the first broken food. He gave them the altar, tabernacle, the chapel seats, and showed

from the beginning the greatest solicitude that nothing should be wanting to the establishment. The first postulant who was received was one of his penitents. At the present moment, thanks to the care of this excellent Bishop and his worthy secretary, the Sisters are supplied with an excellent establishment, and they propose next year to double the buildings destined for the aged, which have quickly become insufficient. The number of poor is already considerable; but the Catholic population of this great city is immense, and almost all in a state bordering on indigence.

"The town of Bristol offered, on a smaller scale, the same needs, and one may say almost as much of all the great towns of England. The Bishop of Clifton, who is, as people know, the illustrious son of Lord Clifford, had visited, in company of Mgr. Grant, the house in London, which was still in its early days; and it would be impossible to hear without admiration a recital of the steps taken by this prelate to give help, to prepare the way for the foundation, or to facilitate its progress. The Sisters have had to move three times on account of the progress of their work, which was extremely rapid.

"Long details would be misplaced on the subject of the houses in Birmingham, Plymouth, and Leeds, which are still passing through the first phase of their organization. The striking fact about the Sisters in Birmingham is that they and their poor live principally on the alms of Protestants, which the Sisters go and beg for from door to door without any distinction, absolutely as they would do in a

Catholic town; and if the alms given to them is usually small enough, it is very rarely accompanied by an uncivil word. These Sisters are looking on all sides for a site where they may be able to fix themselves definitely, and put their work on a good footing. Mgr. Ullathorne is persevering in the search on their behalf, but the great prosperity of the town has brought property to an exaggerated price, and up to the present time, the Little Sisters are too poor to acquire a house of their own. At Plymouth, Mgr. Vaughan charged himself with the installation. He placed, gratuitously, at the disposal of the Little Sisters for several years, the school, with its appendages, which was previously occupied by the Sisters of Notre Dame. He himself directs at present the repairs necessary to receive more poor inmates. All that he gave up to the Little Sisters some months ago is practically filled. Leeds has only a temporary house: the foundation being recent.

"After what has just been said about England, it may perhaps be asked why the Little Sisters almost at the same time went into Scotland. Their having done so is the result of a series of involuntary circumstances, and it seems that if there are in the world foundations for which we have to thank Divine Providence they are these, since they are found placed in the most active centre of Protestantism and of Presbyterian hatred, and, after a terrible outburst of all the bad passions, they have seen the storm subside, and now exist in tranquillity. The Little Sisters began in Dundee, where they were

called and established themselves in consequence of a circumstance which deserves to be noted. There was to be a sale of a large property, which was situated near the town in a place called Lochee, which had been bought by the Catholics with the intention of establishing an orphanage there. The precarious state of the mission and the considerable debts involved rendered this sale indispensable; and what made it the more regrettable was that the church of the parish was included in the property. Then a rich Catholic, or, to speak more exactly, the only rich one in Dundee, addressed himself to Mgr. Strain, now Prefect Apostolic of the Eastern District, and at that time charged with the administration during an absence of Mgr. Gillis. This Catholic, whose whole property is spent in good works, proposed to establish the Little Sisters of the Poor in the place intended for sale, and to give his guarantee for the purchase which was to be made in their name. Mgr. Strain accepted, and the entire population, as well as the clergy, showed an inexpressible joy at this solution. One may say that the Little Sisters have been an instrument of salvation in the case of this mission.

"This same benefactor (Mr. Thiebault), who had known the Little Sisters in France, presented them also to Mgr. Murloch, then Prefect of the Western District. The needs of Glasgow were much greater than those of Dundee. Mgr. Murloch and Mgr. Gray (who was not then coadjutor) deliberated for some time, and then put themselves in direct communication with the congregation, so that the arrival

of the Little Sisters was their united work. Those two devoted prelates scarcely believed their eyes when they saw that the Little Sisters could show themselves everywhere in their habits in the streets of Glasgow, and that the Protestant population, far from insulting them, seemed rather to show them respect. The trial—for there must always be one—came from another side. The house in which the Sisters were to establish themselves on their arrival had none of the most indispensable conveniences, and every effort made to find a better habitation remained long without result. It was reserved to Mgr. Murloch to render this important service to the rising community. He himself negotiated with the Sisters of Mercy about the cession, which these Sisters made to us, of a large establishment which they had bought, and which was found too far from their schools. We paid to the Sisters of Mercy what they had given for it. Mgr. Murloch made the necessary advances, and by this means put us immediately in a condition to triple the number of our poor, accommodating at the same time, at a single stroke, the two congregations.

"The foundation in Edinburgh was made almost in the same way. Mgr. Gillis, being in Rome, had entertained the project of it with His Eminence Cardinal Barnabò, Prefect of Propaganda. The installation of the Sisters in the small houses which they occupied at some distance from his, was one of the last acts of his episcopate. By a secret and adorable movement of Divine Providence, a lady of Brussels felt inspired to provide the first capital for

this foundation, the trials of which could be foreseen. This same lady (Miss Maes) continues to send them every year a considerable subsidy, without which it would be difficult for them to live. The Presbyterian ministers were furious at the beginning. They cried down the Sisters in the pulpit, they put up abusive placards concerning the Little Sisters of the Poor. But by permission from on high, the newspapers which are generally the most opposed to Catholics on this occasion ranged themselves on the side of the Sisters, and, without any solicitation, wrote in their favour, with as much earnestness as the best children of the Church could have done. Mgr. Strain now continued what his predecessor had begun. He saw the Sisters take possession of a new house, which answered perfectly to the needs of the poor, and which had been purchased from the Protestants, as it were by a miracle. It is thus that three Catholic hospices have sprung up at the same time on the soil of Scotland, which had not possessed one since the time of John Knox."

This account, made by the principal witness, who overlooked his own part in exalting that of the Bishops, was brought at the beginning of 1866 under the eyes of the Pope and the Roman congregations, at a time when those concerned in it could render witness on their side. It belongs to the history of the Little Sisters. The Holy See, the equitable appreciator of merit, applauded what had been done.

2. Letter from Cardinal Barnabò, Prefect of Propaganda.*

"To R. F. Lelièvre.—I have received from you personally the full relation which you have brought to my notice concerning the state and progress of the pious society of women which is called the Little Sisters of the Poor, and I have perused it with great pleasure. I knew of a truth that you had deserved exceedingly well of the said society; I knew the cares and labour which you have borne for its increase; but now I greatly congratulate you in the

* "R. D.—Accepi a D. Tua plenam relationem, quam mihi exhibendam curasti de statu ac progressu piæ Societatis Mulierum, quæ Parvæ Sorores pauperum nuncupantur, eamque libenter admodum perlegi. Noveram quidem Te de prædicta Societate optime fuisse meritum, noveram curas ac labores quos pro ejusdem incremento sustinueras; nunc vero Tibi vehementer gratulor in D^no^ quod studio atque operæ constanter a Te in rem collato optimum exitum, piissimus Deus sit elargitus. Quos quidem sensus animi mei eo libentius Tibi aperio, quod non mediocres in locis missionum fructus ex charitate Sororum, de quibus supra, percipiantur. Quæ cum ita sint hortor D. Tuam ut ad Christi pauperum levamen in opere tam bene incœpto perseveres, quo videlicet non Pastorum modo Ecclesiæ commendationem, sed Principis Pastorum, qui pauper pro nobis esse voluit benedictionem ac præmia pergas promereri.

"Precor Deum ut D. Tua prospera quæque largiatur. Roma ex Æd. S. C. de P. F., die 1 Maii, 1866.

"D. Tuæ addictus,

"Al. Card. Barnabò, *Pr.*

"H. Cascatti, *Secr.*

"R. D^no^ Lelièvre."

Lord on God having most graciously accorded a very happy end to the solicitude and activity which you have constantly brought to this affair. I reveal to you these sentiments of my soul the more willingly because the missionary countries receive great benefit from the charity of the Sisters just mentioned. Things being thus, I exhort you personally to persevere for the relief of the poor of Christ in the work so well commenced—that is to say, in such a manner as to continue to merit not only the encouragement of the pastors of the Church, but also the benediction and the rewards of the Prince of pastors, who became poor for us.

"I pray God to grant you all prosperity.

"Your devoted

"AL. CARDINAL BARNABÒ, *Prefect.*

"H. CASCATTI, *Secretary.*

"ROME, PALACE OF THE
S.C. OF THE PROPAGANDA,
"*May* 1, 1866."

CHAPTER XIII

THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR IN ENGLAND AND IN SCOTLAND (*Continued*)

In the London market—The begging Sisters in Scotland—The reappearance of the religious habit—Types of old men—The savings-box—The *London Review*.

A FIGURE stands out in relief in these foundations—that of Sister Emmanuel. Being English, of a good London family, and already Superior of a house in Paris, she had for her mission to help in the settling of the foundations and of the *quête*. No Sister was destined to be a more admirable instrument of Providence in the foundations in England and Scotland. Here we shall return to the episodes. On June 24, 1862, she presented herself, with Sister Claudia, in the market-place of Covent Garden, in London, to make an attempt at begging, whilst an old man was kept in the neighbourhood, furnished with two sacks and a basket. They fearlessly made the round of the market-place, asking out of charity for some vegetables for their old people. God permitted that the first tradeswoman to whom they addressed themselves should be a Catholic. She listened to the statement of the Little Sisters, and gave them salad, cabbage, and carrots. This was a good example for the neighbouring tradespeople; several gave, and the sack was filled. People became

interested in the begging Sisters; they put questions to them about the home, the number of old people, the care they gave them. In general, the tradespeople were kind; nevertheless, God permitted a share of merits should fall to the Sisters, in order that, while receiving much for their poor, they should not return home without having gathered something for themselves. Some tradesmen said that there were beggars enough already, that they ought to be ashamed of themselves, etc. They had prudently kept the old man at a distance to prevent his hearing these insults, and also for fear that the blood of the good Irishman should become hot, and he should take his own way of defending the Sisters. As the Sisters filled their sack, they went to empty it into the sacks and the basket of the old man; and when all was filled, they left the market-place, cheerfully blessing Providence, who had opened in the Metropolis itself this new and abundant resource for the hospitaller work. The Little Sisters reappeared; the tradespeople became used to seeing them, and prepared contributions when they expected the Sisters.

Extracts from letters* allow us to follow their work in Scotland. "The Little Sisters of the Poor arrived in Glasgow on September 26, 1862, at half-past nine in the evening. At the station, no one was waiting for them; they found themselves alone on the spot with their luggage. Finding no carriage, they made arrangements with a porter, who brought

* Correspondence of Sister Emmanuel.

away their things on his hand-cart, happy to make their entrance thus humbly into the town which was to be the scene of their labours and a spot blessed by God." "Through the mud we followed our guide and our luggage, thus attracting the curiosity of the passers-by. It was night, but the streets were filled with people, and no doubt they were astonished at so novel a sight, for until then they had never seen a religious go out in his habit. After having several times asked the way, we found ourselves surrounded by a crowd of young girls, for the greater part poor and barefooted, who had perceived us in the street, and who came to announce our arrival to the religious, for they were the children of their classes." The next day, the new hospitaller Sisters received the Bishop's blessing, and visited their dwelling. "The entrance was not agreeable—first a narrow, dark passage, and then a black staircase leading up to the first story. Our dwelling began at the second story, and contained thirteen rooms, but several of them were very small. These two stories were formerly used as a coffee-room and hotel. There was the place where they used to serve gin and whisky, and where one could only see by gas light." It was not long before they received a poor old woman, who smoked her pipe every day. The arrival of the first old man was the signal to begin begging. Sister Emmanuel, accompanied by one or other Sisters, started off trusting in God. Someone on the road gave her sixpence, with which she bought a map of the town to learn her way. The begging Sisters presented themselves in the market-place.

"We were received better than we had ever dared to expect; there were Catholics in the market-place, and they all hastened to give. There were vegetables in abundance, eggs, butter, cheese, a great quantity of apples and onions, and twenty-five shillings." At this first gathering a policeman cleared away from time to time the children, who followed in a troop, curious to know what the Sisters were like. Several Protestants gave; Catholics sent the Sisters on from one to another; people kissed their mantles and asked their blessing. God made it clear that they would not be in want for their poor. The alms-gatherers obtained coffee-grounds, tea-leaves, waste bread, in the two largest Protestant hotels. The poor old people who were received brought nothing but rags. When their miserable clothes were still good enough to be used, they were boiled to get rid of the vermin, and there was a competition between the Little Sisters who should do the washing. Clothes were wanted. The Sisters presented themselves at a shop where old clothes were sold; they received a little money and some clothes, and were allowed to go there once a month. They went to Protestants to ask for bits of printed calico to make into bed-covers, and received a good deal; thus the beds of the home were provided; they were not long without having their patchwork counterpanes, according to the rules of holy poverty. "We are the only nuns who are able to go out here in the religious habit; people look at us, and that is all. We see, posted up in the booksellers' shops, all sorts of publications to make the Papists, as they call us, despised and

hated, and yet God permits that we make our little collections. Already our little home is furnished. . . . They call me the Reverend Mother; it would be well to add 'beggar,' and I dare say they do. They have never been able to comprehend the vocation of a Little Sister, and they wonder at it every day; for to have houses without funds, depending upon Divine Providence, surpasses their spirit of faith." The collection was made quite simply, without any secrecy. They entered the shops or market, and announced themselves as "collectors for the poor"; then they gave their explanation of the work, and they were sure that listeners out of three-fourths of the people would hear them. If it was in the street or the market-place, there was at once a group of people listening to the explanation of the Sisters, and when they began to give coppers the purse was soon stocked. In this way, they succeeded in gathering money for paying the rent, filling the house with poor people, starting a fund for the purchase of a house, and making an inroad on Protestant prejudices in favour of Catholic charity.

In Dundee a newspaper* had inserted an article in favour of the hospitaller institution. "We were already known in the town through Mr. Thiebault and the newspaper. We were objects of curiosity to everybody, but no one said anything disagreeable to us; people looked at us, that was all, then they followed us. On returning from the town we received several small coins and halfpence. The barber of

* The *Advertiser*.

the village, meeting us on the road, stopped us to bid us to come to his house every Monday for a loaf, and so did the schoolmaster; they were both Protestants. . . . We have begun to beg in one quarter, with a guide to show us the lodgings of the Catholic poor. There were often several tenants in one single room, and in others there were large families. Everybody hastened to give. Generally they were pleased to see us, sometimes even touched to tears, praying us to return. These poor people look upon the presence of a religious as a benediction upon their house, and do not omit to show their sick ones. It was in this way that we made our first little gathering from door to door, receiving from one to twenty-four coppers at a time."

The spiritual privations were great in these foundations in Scotland. One may judge by this reply of the Bishop of Edinburgh: "I grant you willingly every permission you desire, and I willingly sign your paper; but you must look for a priest to give you the benedictions: I have none." The little colony had arrived in Edinburgh on September 8, 1863. The welcome of the clergy and of the few existing communities was cordial; labourers were needed for the vineyard, and they felt that every Catholic work was a form of apostleship, at the same time an appreciable help for the poor. "Our habit roused curiosity to a certain extent, and often people came near or in front of us to have a good look at us, and when once satisfied, they passed on. In the poor quarters, which were for the greater part

Catholic, they very often gave us halfpence in the streets, and sometimes even small pieces of silver, and they made signs to us, to go up to such a house to receive something. We did not know where the Catholics lived, but they made them known to us. Generally they received us eagerly, but from time to time God allowed it to be otherwise." As they received more and more broken food, the begging Sisters were no longer strong enough to carry the large pans. Fortunately they received into the home an old man, a former porter, and also a vehicle to be drawn by hand; they utilized both. "This little vehicle was perhaps the most curious thing that was ever seen in the Little Family; it was neither a carriage, nor cart, nor wheelbarrow, and still it was a little of each, but it was more like a trunk placed on wheels and painted green. Certainly the priest who had made us this present had well understood that we were called to practise the virtue of humility even to humiliation." However, the rolling trunk was useful; with careful packing it would hold three pans and a large sack of bread; what remained over that had to be carried. People soon knew the green trunk of the Little Sisters, and when it stopped, the children ran to it, curious to see what was inside and how it was managed. They could easily see into it, although they were so small.

The Bishop and the French Consul put their names at the head of the subscription-list. The Little Sisters succeeded in obtaining a recommendation not less important. "To aim high from the beginning, we presented ourselves at the Lord

Provost's house, where Lord Brougham was at that moment. It was not an occasion to be lost, so we asked him, and we had the honour to see him. He received us very well, and put his name on our list, giving us £1. The Lord Provost did as much, and Lord Brougham, in a speech which he made the same day, mentioned our visit, so that the next day it was in all the newspapers." We then began to beg from door to door. The first day we picked up £1 1s. "We received as much for ourselves as for others. We encountered dry, harsh, severe faces; we entered large, beautiful drawing-rooms, where luxury abounded, but all was cold and icy. It seldom happened that we excited any sympathy, but we were content for God's sake. On returning we were glad to find some Catholic houses, which served as much to refresh the heart as to fill the purse."

Thirty old men, rescued from pauperism, filled the house, and the establishment was becoming of some importance, when Protestant bigotry exploded. It must not be forgotten that the presence of the Little Sisters in the streets and in the houses meant the reappearance of the religious habit and of Catholic charity, and that was in itself matter for sectarian polemics. One of the ministers put in the papers a letter against the Little Sisters; this was a signal of controversy for and against them. "All through Easter-time (1864) there was to be seen in the frequented streets of the town a procession of men bearing on their backs the following poster, written in big letters: 'No Begging Nuns,' one single letter on the back of every bearer; this is a common way

of attracting the special attention of the public." The Sisters were several times pelted with stones; some of their window-panes were broken, and other acts of violence sometimes led them to fear positive outrage. Many intelligent Protestants who admired them, did not dare to open their doors to them. The Catholics themselves at one time believed that they would retire before the storm. Things went on in this way till the day when, through Divine permission, the *Scotsman*, the most widely-circulated journal in Scotland, took up in several articles, full of energy and good sense, the defence of the Little Sisters and their poor old people.

A new era begins. The year 1865 found the hospitaller work in possession of three properties in Glasgow, Dundee, and Edinburgh. Sympathies strong and lasting awoke on all sides in favour of the poor old people. It was the same in England—Manchester, Bristol, Birmingham, Plymouth, Leeds, Newcastle, passed successfully through the difficult period of foundation. The good Mother Saint Joseph, who had been Superior previously in Brussels, understood well how to act in England, and took an important part in several of these foundations.

The old people cannot be forgotten throughout this history. Let us relate some facts. The second house in London was started. That very evening two old men were received from the workhouse; they brought all their goods in a pocket-handkerchief; but Christ entered the home in the person of the

poor, and that caused great joy to the Little Sisters. They lighted the fire for them, prepared their meal, installed them in the dormitory; but while the Little Sisters were making their beds these two good old men knelt down, and, lifting up their hands to heaven, blessed God. They were happy, and so were the Sisters.

Palmer was a gardener in a large house; old age brought him to the home, where he devoted himself to piety. His old master and mistress sent him their doctor to attend him in his last illness. "Sir," he said to the doctor at his third visit, "I am seventy-two years old; I have been a Catholic not yet a year, but since I became one I have done more for my soul than in all the course of my previous existence." The old man continued: "What good is it to give medicine to a dead man? My body is dead, my soul lives. Know, sir, that it lives, and that it will live. As to my body, it belongs to you and to the good Mother, and I do not trouble myself about what you may do with it."

Morley came to the home to die. He was a veteran of the foundation, the most pious man, and the greatest grumbler in the world, for he knew how to combine these two things in a superior degree. He was very submissive to God and to the Little Sister, but he loved to say that things were going wrong, and when he had made all his complaints he was in good humour for some time. Never could he be got to admit that his eighty-two years were the reason why he was not so well as he had been. Death did not cause him the slightest grief; he was

penetrated with confidence in God, and with joy at leaving the world, where in his last days he could no longer pray with ease.

In Birmingham they received an old man with white hair, feeble and almost blind. He was an inventor. He had invented a method of writing, which is still used a little; he had also invented or perfected an instrument of music, which he had brought with him, and on which he occasionally played airs, perhaps composed by himself. He spent his days sitting either in the hall or on the bench in the garden, leaning on his stick, buried in his dreams and his thoughts. He took hardly any part in what went on around him; but speak to him about his invention, he would be at once animated and quite a different man.

In Manchester, in the room of the women, a clock was wanted. It must be said that the house was not furnished with a large clock, not even a bell, so that the blind, the half-deaf, the half-paralyzed women, heard nothing and saw nothing, did not know the hour, nor how time was going. A clock which struck the hour was, in their idea, a companion, a distraction, a recreation. When one is rich, such an expense is nothing; when one is in want of a hundred things of this kind, and has debts, every expense is important. It was decided that the good women should make a novena, and that the Little Sister would go and beg for a clock. She experienced several refusals. At last a watchmaker gave a timepiece. But the women were only half satisfied; they wished to have a clock that

would strike. The old women again began their novena, and the Little Sister her round. By a providential accident she came to a large warehouse of clockwork. "Sir," said the Sister, "our poor old women would be so happy to hear the hour strike; could you give us a clock that strikes?" The recital touched the dealer, who was a Catholic. "Yes, Sister, and I will go and put it up for you." He did so. When the women saw him put up the precious clock they gave him a real ovation. The joy of the poor was his reward, and he began to love this work, of the existence of which he had till then been quite ignorant.

It is time that the cabbage traffic and the savings-box should make their appearance in our narrative. It will have been observed that the mother-house contributed to the success of the work by accepting foundations and furnishing the hospitaller staff, but it helped little in money, for its own expenses were heavy at the time, both for raising and supporting the novitiate, and for meeting the general expenses of administration and journeys. However, the large gardens of the Tour Saint-Joseph had just been made available, and fertile vegetables grew in abundance in this new ground. The good Mother-General had an idea, which was agreed to, to draw profit from it for the foundations in England; and the scheme was successful, thanks to the devotedness of Alexander Gandon, the gardener, an excellent man, who set himself to sell the vegetables in the neighbouring district. The product of the sales, including the pay of the generous gardener, was put

into a purse and reserved for England, but this was far from sufficient.

A certain number of friends in France and in Belgium, regarding these foundations as a part of missionary work, sent some offerings to help towards the first expenses of the establishments.* Of these friends Monsieur Louis Marest of Amiens, and Monsieur Paul Le Picard of Rouen, were in the first rank.

"The needs are great, but the fruits of this Catholic invasion are immense. As for me, I shall pray much for this intention, and every month I shall try to send my little subscription." So wrote the two friends. This form of charity or apostleship pleased several friends of the hospitaller work, who promised a monthly contribution. The Rev. Lelièvre (or Father Ernest, as they called him) was the godfather of the institution to which he gave the name of "savings-box," and Mr. Louis Marest was its very devoted manager. The "savings-box was not long contented with the humble salary which the regular assessments of its subscribers provided; it soon joined to this a kind of perquisite, consisting either of extraordinary gifts made to the committee by strangers, or of supplementary alms remitted by the associates themselves on the occasion of an approaching feast, of an unforeseen need announced

* We may mention the Rev. Bruno de Laage, the families Bernard and Kolb Bernard, Cosserat, Ledieu, De Givenchy, d'Aripe, General de Yermoloff, etc. The Empress Eugénie, the Duke d'Aumale, and the Duke de Chartres were among the benefactors of the London houses.

from England, of a new foundation to be dowered, or even of some work of zeal amongst themselves." The source opened at Amiens was destined to flow a long time.

The generous and persevering effort of so many persons succeeded. A writer of reputation—Mr. Blanchard Jerrold—boldly took the part of the Little Sisters of the Poor in the *Morning Post* and in several papers. In October, 1865, the *London Review*, in an article which was reproduced in several local papers, did not hesitate to say: "We have to speak of an Institution, which for originality, grandeur of design, and devotedness of Christian sacrifice, may compare with any of the most renowned charities of rich Protestant England."

CHAPTER XIV

THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR IN SPAIN

The foundations in Barcelona, Manresa, Granada, Lerida, Lorca—Official receptions, processions, and serenades—Foundations in Malaga, Antequera, Madrid, and Jaen—New character of the hospitaller work.

In 1863 the conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul in Barcelona wished to organize some public soup-kitchens. A zealous merchant, Señor Mariano Lluch, proposed to call in the Little Sisters of the Poor, whom he had visited in Paris, and whose popular name rallied all suffrages. The mother-house, being sounded on the subject, pointed out that there was a misapprehension as to the object of the congregation, as the Little Sisters devoted themselves exclusively to the work for old people. The ordinary condition being accepted and the idea of a public relief centre being set aside, the good Mother, Marie de la Conception, Assistant-General, crossed the Pyrenees, and arrived in Barcelona on the Feast of Saint Joseph, March 19, 1863. The Baron of Monclar, president of the conferences, and Señor Lluch obtained the official authorization of the Archbishop, the Governor, the Mayor, and the feeling in society was favourable. A house was hired for 3,000 pesetas; the same day a stranger sent this amount. This naturally made a great impression on the benefactors

of the work. "As for us," wrote the good Mother, "we were not surprised, as our Little Family is led by Divine Providence."

Already the little colony destined for the first foundation in Spain had left France; but the Little Sisters arrived at the same time as the letter announcing them, and it was nine o'clock in the evening. What were they to do at that hour? They had no beds, the neighbours lent them blankets and pillows, and they had a room full of straw. They lay down there with more joy than they would have done, had they found beds all ready, and said, laughingly: "What a happiness that they did not know beforehand of our arrival; at least we have a taste of the privations of a foundation!" Our Little Sisters did not know much Spanish, but several had learned the "*Catalane*" at Perpignan, as this dialect is spoken there as in Catalonia. They made their appearance in the market-place, and saw themselves surrounded by persons of all conditions. "Everybody was glad to see them and to say a good word to them, invoking the blessings of God on them, and begging them to accept an offering." When the collecting Sisters came back to the house and told, to the great joy of the other Sisters, what had happened, they all laid down the product of the collection at the feet of Saint Joseph, and prayed for the good and generous donors. The Sisters could only receive women, as the house only contained accommodation for twenty-two. Soon an old man of eighty years presented himself, saying: "I have come to stay here." They refused to accept him.

"My name is Joseph," said the old man. Hearing this they consented to receive him in honour of their holy Patron. But he was covered with rags, and there were no clothes in the home for men. Two Little Sisters got ready to go out to beg for them. Just then there came a ring at the door, and a parcel was handed in. What a surprise! It was a complete suit of clothing for a man. We dressed Joseph in them, and he was very happy to be so well clad. He said to us in his simplicity that he had never had such a suit, that people would take him for a señor. There was no lack of resources, and the good Mother Assistant, who was accustomed to see like generosity elsewhere, wrote: "I have never yet made a foundation like this one. Everybody is in admiration, and people bring us things from all sides." The work, indeed, had a modern character, which strongly aroused the attention and sympathy of the Spanish people, for as the good Mother said: "In Spain nuns were not in the habit of taking charge of men, and it was a new thing to see them begging."

Encouraged by the success, Señor Mariano Lluch had prepared a second foundation at Manresa, his native town. The Mayor, Señor Torrens, seconded him, and the municipality on July 10, 1863, formally placed at the disposal of the new hospitaller Sisters a convent, which, though very dilapidated, was still capable of being made into a good establishment. On August 21, the civil and religious authorities were at the station to receive the colony. A long train of people led our humble Little Sisters

to the grotto of Saint Ignatius, as if to confide them to the zeal of the celebrated Company of Jesus, and from there to the old convent, situated precisely above the precious grotto. Here it is fitting to pay our tribute to the Jesuit Fathers, who showed themselves everywhere favourable to the foundations of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and nowhere more so than at Manresa, where they supplied regularly the broken victuals from their establishments and gave their spiritual service to the poor little home for old people.

More than once in the course of those foundations, the character of the Catholic and chivalrous Spaniards triumphed over the humility of the Little Sisters. Solemn receptions by the authorities, popular processions, serenades, etc., often welcomed their arrival. But the work remained in its humility, and experienced the inseparable trials of a foundation. At Manresa, on the Sunday after the arrival, the procession was again formed, and conducted the Little Sisters and their first four poor old women to the church, which was brilliantly illuminated, to assist at a solemn High Mass and a sermon in their praise. Then, when the population had brought them back to the home so dear to them, the Mayor made a very sympathetic speech in the name of the municipality. Some days later, the Little Sisters of the Poor had a great joy, for, on August 28, they received two postulants, the firstfruits of their Spanish subjects.

It is in the nature of charity to be industrious and to adapt itself to local conditions, in order to do its

beneficent work. In the region of Manresa they cultivate the *garbánzos*, a kind of peas much appreciated in Spain and beaten at harvest-time in the public threshing-floors. The Little Sisters presented themselves at a favourable moment, and obtained provision for the home without expense. At the time of vintage they made the round of the wine-presses, with the donkey carrying two large leather bottles, and their barrels at home were thus filled with wine. They did the same to obtain provisions of olive oil and grain. All these little voluntary contributions of the farmers and proprietors represent an equivalent quantity of generosity and made the home flourish. A little later it happened that a benefactor promised two litres of oil, adding that if the harvest produced more than the ordinary quantity, he would give the surplus. Now, it yielded thirty litres more, to his brother's great surprise, for he had the same quantity of olives, and was not able to extract more than the ordinary measure of oil. In his joy, the donor spread about that Saint Joseph had multiplied the oil at his mill, and his servants confirmed his words.

Señor Escolano, governor of the bank at Barcelona, was already occupied in establishing the hospitaller institution in Granada, his native country; and on his invitation, Señor de Toledo, Mayor of the town, officially requested the Little Sisters to found a house in Barcelona; thirty-five influential persons of the place signed the document. His

brother-in-law, Señor Manuel Orti, professor at the University of Madrid, welcomed the Little Sisters of the Poor on their way through the capital, and himself accompanied them in an ordinary public conveyance to their destination. Of what did the travellers think during that beautiful journey? "During that journey we experienced much happiness in following the same road that St. Teresa had taken when she went to Seville. We prayed earnestly that she might obtain for us the spirit which animated her, and that we, like her, might be filled with the love of God, and very zealous for the salvation of souls." A deputation of notable persons, with the Mayor at its head, was waiting to receive them as they got out of the carriage, and assured them of the goodwill of the administration. This took place at the end of December, 1863. The Little Sisters installed themselves in a hired house, which they filled with poor old people, who formed their adopted family. "Our kind of life and our reliance on Providence were for our benefactors a subject of admiration; but they feared that the work would not be well understood by the inhabitants of Granada, who were not used to see nuns in the streets." Well, the two begging Sisters went out. "They began in the market-place. It was a thing so new and touching for this people, full of faith, to see two nuns asking alms for the love of God! In one instant they found themselves surrounded by so many people that they could not walk." One thing struck these good inhabitants of Granada: "Seeing our Sisters beg, they seemed

to see Saint John of God still in their streets, for his memory is always living."*

A document, bearing forty-four signatures of inhabitants of Lerida, decreed the establishment of a home for the aged in that town in 1864. Señor De Gomar went himself to Barcelona to seek the Little Sisters of the Poor, who on their arrival at Lerida saw themselves surrounded by a sympathetic population, and found a house quite prepared to receive them. After this splendid beginning, it was essential for the Little Sisters to conduct themselves with energy and devotedness to the work for which they had come, entering on that course of sacrifice, privation, forgetfulness of self, absolute confidence in God, by which alone such works are founded. "In a multitude of things where Nature might have complained I have never heard them murmur; on the contrary, they would say: 'We are contented.'—'It is all the same.'—'It is for God's sake.' I have seen them take off their own clothes and give them to our poor old women to prevent their being cold." Such is the witness borne to them by the Assistant-General who established all these foundations.

There was soon in this house a company of really destitute poor, among whom was an old woman, who had been found under a staircase, where she was lying on straw, quite paralyzed and in rags, and who had been carried to the home. Such an assembly of poor naturally disposed the public opinion favour-

* All these statements are extracts from the correspondence of the good Mother Marie de la Conception.

ably. In spite of that, many things were lacking to complete the foundation, and consequently the month of Saint Joseph, 1865, was observed with great fervour, stimulated by need. There were gathered there a few poor women, worn out by age and infirmities. The Little Sisters had no money, no provision for the future. Together they prayed in a humble oratory around a modest altar raised to their Patron Saint. All their miseries pleaded for them. It was feebleness itself in the eyes of the world, but these misfortunes were rich in the love of God, and confidence in God, and these very needs opened the treasury of Providence. Once more the foolishness of the Cross was about to triumph over human wisdom, and to establish on these foundations, apparently in ruins, a flourishing home blessed by God and men.

In Lorca, a lady had bequeathed 25,000 pesetas for the poor; but how could a hospice be founded with this sum? Señor Saavedra offered them to the Little Sisters, provided they would establish a home in the town, and the municipality, desirous of realizing their scheme, offered an old convent, situated in a picturesque position, half a mile from Lorca. It should be borne in mind that at that time the political changes in Spain had brought about the suppression of a certain number of religious houses, and consequently the destitution of the poor in many places. The hospitaller institution thus responded to a public need, and offered the advantage of founding hospices without disadvantage to the Budget. This explains the eagerness of the

municipalities to welcome it. So, on November 21, 1864, the Assistant-General and the appointed Superior were on their way to Lorca. President Señor Saavedra, who accompanied them, invited the two good Mothers to get out of the carriage. It was in the middle of the country. " We were very surprised to see the clergy and all the authorities of the town waiting for us. They made us get out of the stage-coach and take our seats in the carriage prepared to carry us to the town, for we had still an hour's journey before us. These gentlemen accompanied us to the house of the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul, and in leaving us, the Mayor announced that in the evening the town band would come to play under our windows." It was, in fact, a serenade.

During that time the community in Barcelona, which had existed a year and a half, left the small house in which they had started, and installed themselves at Ensanche on December 1, 1864, with a number of inmates, which suddenly increased from twenty-five to seventy-five old people. It was necessary to arrange the dormitories and the bedding, to procure the linen and clothing, to get ready the fuel and wood, to see to each new-comer, to open the door to all visitors or donors. The Little Sisters found it difficult to meet this pious invasion, and at the same time to keep something of the interior life amidst so much bustle; however, they went on with their work, happy to devote themselves and to take part in this energetic movement of beneficence. That gave occasion to the

outsiders to remark with what obedience, calmness, and serenity the Little Sisters, thus overwhelmed, attended to their duties, so that all were edified by their virtue. Someone having given a cart and a donkey to do the marketing, the old men came down joyfully to try them, considering the gift as their common property, they got into the "tartania" and had a drive. The following day it was the turn of the begging Sisters to make use of it. As they returned when the community was at recreation, the good Mother and the other Little Sisters naturally went to meet the equipage. "Saint Joseph is inside!" cried the begging Sisters. They open the door, draw out the parcels, and show their companions seventy-eight new linen sheets ready for use.

One circumstance gave a fresh impetus to the foundations in Spain; this was the visit of the Superior-Generals, who visited the established houses, encouraged the Little Sisters, discussed other foundations, and promised all the assistance possible from the mother-house. People were much interested in the "little curate" and the "little work-women" of Saint-Servan, as they called the Superior-General herself. The contrast between the feebleness of the small beginnings and the rapid developments of the new work, struck men's minds and excited more than once a religious enthusiasm, which, according to custom, expressed itself in serenades, speeches, ovations.

It is important not to mistake the character of

the work. These manifestations, in whatever country they may occur, are accidental things, and pass with the circumstances that produce them. The character of the work is humility, simplicity, the gift of self, the good of the poor, the glory of God; but these things themselves attract the esteem or praise of men, and tend to show themselves on great occasions.

The foundation in Malaga, which it was decided to undertake under the circumstances just related, took place in April, 1865, in a hired house. A touching ceremony, worthy of the most beautiful ages of faith, sets it out in relief. The parish priest of Saint John wished, on the Feast of Pentecost, to give Holy Communion to the sick, with the traditional ceremony of the country. The benefactors came to decorate the entrance-hall, the yard, the chapel, for this veritable "Fête-Dieu," whilst the clergy had prepared the souls. At seven o'clock in the morning the procession left the church; the Blessed Sacrament was escorted by a hundred gentlemen bearing candles; a regimental band sent forth its trumpet-sounds. A pious crowd followed the procession; six policemen guarded the entrance of the home and maintained order. The procession entered the house of the poor, decorated that day with hangings, flowers, and small flags; and the old men and women, blessing God, who came to them with such splendour and kindness, believed themselves to be in Paradise. The bystanders were moved at the sight of these poor people, weighed down with old age and infirmities, but happy and

consoled; at that moment they were truly "the poor of the good God," and that "communion for the sick" manifested our immortal religion, shedding forth on living ruins, her rays of hope and consolation.

A year and a half later, the house of Malaga counted seventy old people, but a great many often really wretched still were knocking at the door. Cases had to be refused, so that the Sisters' hearts were heavy, and this trial lasted several days. At last, at the recreation of the Sisters, the debate between prudence and charity began. Every Little Sister examined if there was not some corner that could be utilized in her department, or in the places available for the common rooms of the house. Their great desire to take care of as many poor as possible, made them place the beds close together and invent places; by so doing they managed to receive ten more old people. Hygiene was not considered in their council.

In Andalusia, likewise, they made the foundation of Antequera, on June 23, 1865, on the initiative of Canon Jose Gutierreo. As the house was dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the feast fell on the following day, they immediately received the first poor inmate. A Mass said in the chapel marked the opening of the home, and during it the poor man had the place of honour as the representative of those who were to come. We must note that two important factories set up a charity-box, in which the workmen came on pay-days to put in their offerings for the support of an establishment for the

benefit of their parents, and old companions, and also for themselves in their old age. The alms of those who labour have a double value.

But how were the old men at the house of Antequera getting on? One of them, with a characteristic Southern emphasis, replied: "Too well. I am dressed like a King, lodged like a lord; I have delicious food, and a bed like a married man. People pay me more attention than I deserve. I have only one care, and that is to look for the freshest place to take my siesta!" To speak the truth, the house was poor, and beset with difficulties during its period of organization; but the old men were well disposed, and spoke well of their home. A circumstance, trifling in appearance, proved this. Towards 1867 provisions of all kinds were lacking. The donkey having finished the oats, the old man who took care of him could not make up his mind to give him only straw. So the following Sunday, when the good Mother came to say grace, the men rose and declared they would no longer drink wine, and that with the money thus economized they would buy the oats for the donkey, because, they said, the poor beast was so sad. The old man who took charge of it had gained the other men to his cause, and made this simple plot. Heaven no doubt willed that the poor should not suffer privation, for a kind señor sent a sack of oats for the donkey, a sack of maize for the pigs, and a big packet of tobacco for the old men. Everybody was contented—especially the donkey.

It is now the turn for the capital to have a foundation. Doña Carmel de la Concha and the

Marchioness of Santiago obtained the authorization from the Governor of Madrid and the Archbishop of Toledo; Señor Orti became surety for the lease of the house. The Mayor approved, and gave instructions to his agents, through the Commissary-General, to protect the begging Sisters, the press announced in approving terms the charitable enterprise, and at the beginning of January, 1867, the foundation was effected under satisfactory conditions. The Mother-Superior wrote of it to the mother-house: "I do not know how to tell you of all the marvels which God accomplishes under my eyes. We can only bless His kindness and hold ourselves very humble before Him, since He graciously wills to work such wonders through His poor children. We have already twelve men, of whom one is blind, eighty-three years of age, and very interesting; we have twenty women, amongst whom is one a hundred years old; she is lively and alert, and shows the Little Sister how to do Spanish cookery. Yesterday, February 17, we had Holy Mass in our chapel for the first time. Some days ago the greatest ladies of Madrid supplied it with all that was necessary—chalice, ciborium, vestments, curtains, etc.; nothing is wanting. At half-past eight brilliant equipages arrive, accompanying the Nuncio, who is to officiate. At the Post-Communion he addresses a pathetic allocution to the congregation, who are deeply moved. In the evening there was a sermon by the greatest preacher in Madrid, and the head parish priest of the town gave Benediction, while twelve young ladies sang the service."

Let us mention the ninth foundation, which com-

menced at Jaen in April, 1867. Spain had comprehended the genius of the work and assimilated it; she adopts with enthusiasm these new hospitaller Sisters, who help poor old people of both sexes, and who organize large homes with the resources of the private charity, which they collect themselves.

CHAPTER XV

IN FRANCE

The social question—Two eloquent voices—A hundred houses—The trembling castle—A Jewess—An engineer—The chapel at Nîmes—The voice of tradition—La Tour Saint Joseph.

THE social question was the great problem which agitated the spirit of the masses in the second half of the nineteenth century, and assistance for infirm age was a notable part of it. The institution of the Little Sisters of the Poor, appearing in the world at the opportune moment, had the merit of responding to the aspirations of the crowd at the time when the democracy came into power, and of showing deeds, while the press and the orators were merely talking. This time again Christian charity had the intuition of the new need, and the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor counted from 1867 a hundred establishments for the infirm and poor old people.

An eloquent voice which was raised in 1861 at Poitiers, spread abroad with that fame, which accompanies talent, the praise of the humble congregation. "Scarcely had it made its appearance," said Mgr. Pie, "than it was already the object of universal sympathy. What is more touching, indeed, than to see these young women employ the best years of their lives in solacing and embellishing existence which

without them would end too often in sadness and misfortune? One is moved to tears in the presence of these delicate attentions, of these practices of charity inspired by faith. One would say that these terrestrial angels have only renounced the sweetness of their natural family to transport all their filial piety to these strangers, toward whom they take at once the position of daughters, sisters, and mothers. This abnegation of themselves, this tenderness of heart toward old people, yesterday unknown to them; this mixture of gaiety and reserve, of gentleness and authority, which causes peace to reign between so many wills difficult to satisfy; this love of God which expresses and interprets itself at every hour by the affectionate support of our neighbour—there is something there to move the most insensible of hearts."

Let us give other examples of eloquence and poetry. The celebrated Father Felix* speaks: "Little Sisters of the Poor! Who among you does not love that charming name—that name so well chosen? It is well conceived because it springs from the very thing it expresses, as a flower springs from its stem. There is in it a charm thoroughly Christian and thoroughly apostolic, because it expresses what is purest in Christianity and most efficacious in apostleship—the union of charity and humility. Sisters of the Poor by their charity, they are their Little Sisters by humility. As the water follows the slope to pour

* Celebrated for his conferences on progress by Christianity at Notre Dame in Paris. He preached this sermon on charity in several great towns of France and Belgium.

itself on the humblest valleys, their charity, derived from God through the heart of Jesus Christ, follows the lowest depths of human suffering in order to pour out these its benefits. Poverty, sickness, age, and solitude—alas! each of these miseries, taken separately, is for the man who is affected by it, a great misfortune. But when these four miseries are united so as to form but one; what when they all press at the same time and on the same being, to crush him? Yes, they exist, the veterans of misfortune who see the chains of these sufferings lengthen with the chain of their days; who are condemned to live on still, when around them and in them they see nothing but the ruins of their fortune, the ruins of their body, the ruins of their days, and the more desolate ruins of their own devastated hearts. When these poor have reached the hour of their direst need, the Little Sisters approach, saying: These are ours. It is to them that we will give ourselves. Oh! by my faith and by yours, if there be a charity, we see it here. If the poor have sisters, behold them.

"Have you seen old age in the family? Have you counted all the humiliations it exacts? If you have witnessed those voluntary services where love is measured by the greatness of the abasement, you may understand what a whole multitude of old people exact of the servants of the poor. Ah! behold this spectacle of the purest devotedness, placed in humility at the service of the greatest miseries, meditate on it sometimes. There I have seen, face to face, human nature and Christianity

with its mysteries of sacrifice. In a narrow space, where infirmities are in contact with infirmities, and sorrows with sorrows, amongst eight or ten old persons, all naturally more repulsive the one than the other, I have seen the Little Sister of the Poor drawing her young breath in that atmosphere which their breath has infected, and going from one to the other, like the angel of affliction and of consolation. I have seen there, in the midst of these decaying creatures, the young girl of twenty years like a flower of life among human ruins, pouring out there in charity the best sap of her life. And she was there not for one hour—not for one day; she was there for all her life. She was there expecting nothing—nothing but the happiness to suffer for the members of the suffering Jesus Christ!

"The Master has said: 'The poor ye have always with you.' Yes, beings poor in every sense will always exist. As a certain number of decaying creatures are every year cut down by death, so a certain number every year are struck by misfortune—by misery which comes forth from the very entrails of living society, which attaches itself to the earth as to its native place, which ends in one being only to begin in another, and revives incessantly from the very force of circumstances and the weakness of men.

"This is what explains the truly social influence which the institute of the Little Sisters of the Poor is destined to exercise. It has on its side not only divine inspiration; it has human attraction. It is in the most rigorous sense of the word, sympathetic

to humanity. The needs which it has the vocation to relieve, will be always living necessities of human nature."

Whilst these eloquent voices were sounding, the hospitaller family founded new homes in France: in Nice, Lorient, Nevers, and Flers in 1862; Villefranche-sur-Saône, Cambrai and Niort in 1863; Paris (fifth house) in 1864; les Sables d'Olonne and Troyes in 1865; Maubeuge in 1866; Nîmes and Toulon in 1867. Toulon had the honour to be the hundredth house of the congregation.

As history is not a simple index, but a living study, we must now return to the narrations; for these incidents not only have the simple or varied charm of narration, but they convey direct impressions, and are an echo of the epoch, which must be heard before it dies away.

On March 24, 1862, the Little Sisters of the Poor went to the suburb of Kerentreck at Lorient, where was situated the "trembling castle," which became the home for the old people. The situation is beautiful, agreeable, and healthy, but the premises were in a state of absolute dilapidation. Whether the flooring was wood or earth, whether the walls were white or black, one could not have told at first sight, so greatly had the smoke, mildew, and dust accumulated in the course of years. However, the Little Sisters took possession of the place with joy. They found there six beds, a pail, and some brooms; they washed, rubbed, and cleaned. A little, tottering old woman also arrived with a goat, her

only possession, asking to be received. She was the first old person in the house, the goat the first animal in the yard. The first evening the Sisters had to sit on the floor, as they were without table or chairs, and they had to live thus for three or four days; the twigs from the garden supplied the first wood to heat the soup, the travelling-basket the first meal. However, the Little Sisters put up a bell to ring for the exercises of the community, and called in workmen to whitewash the walls, renew the rotten planks, pull down the partitions, and repair the locks which were out of order. In 1863 there were fifty old people. Once more it was shown that poverty is the soil in which charity grows. The devotedness, widely organized by the Little Sisters of the Poor, is the agent which makes it productive, because the home is an incessant call to charity; it arouses it, attracts it, and forces it constantly to perform its works of benevolence and humanity.

At Nevers, the country house of the great seminary, situated near the town, became the establishment of suffering old age at the price of 22,000 francs. The Little Sisters arrived there, like the birds in spring, on March 31, 1862. Mgr. Forcade, who was awaiting them at the Bishop's house, joyfully introduced them into a large room, where he had assembled their adoptive family—ten old men and women, the most wretched in the town. This sight touched the compassionate hearts of the Little Sisters, and kindly greetings were exchanged in presence of the Bishop. There was a great deal to do to supply bedding for

the old people. With every newcomer the problem was renewed—where to put him to sleep, how to supply a bed for him. A provision of beds was found, which Providence had provided. It was in the hands of the municipality and dated from 1848. This bedding had been prepared by the inhabitants for the soldiers. At the request of some good people the municipality divided it into three parts, of which one was assigned to the home for old people. They thus received forty straw mattresses, forty mattresses, eighty blankets, and 120 pairs of sheets. What an inheritance! They regarded the approach of winter without fear for the poor. In 1863, after the ecclesiastical retreat, the good Bishop went to the home with the greater part of the clergy of the diocese, and he himself explained the hospitaller work to his priests, its utility and its needs, appealing to their goodwill that a hospice might be erected there for 100 old men at least.

It was a heavy undertaking to establish and maintain 100 hospices without any other support than public charity and the devotedness of the Sisters. Consequently every house had its own benefactors. At Besançon the local benefactors had made some repairs and enlarged the house. Mr. Michel, chief editor of the *Union Franc-Comtoise*, rendered great services. He was even able to touch the heart of Mr. Weil Picard, a Jewish banker, who contributed 40,000 francs at least to the construction. It is true that the Little Sisters assist the old people of all religions. At Nancy, two Sisters were returning from their collection. It was late; the weather was

dark and cold. They heard groans, and, approaching the spot, saw a poor old sickly woman leaning against a boundary-stone. They ask with kindly interest as to the cause of her complaints. "Why did you not go to the house of the Little Sisters of the Poor?" "No, never; they would not receive me!" "And why not?" "Because I am a Jewess." "Come, come with us," they said; and, gently forcing her, the Sisters took her with them. They related the adventure to the good Mother, who entered heartily into their charitable idea, and the daughter of Israel found shelter and assistance under the roof of the servants of Jesus Christ.

In spite of all, the faith of the Little Sisters was sometimes put to proof. An occurrence which happened in Lyons is still remembered. A writer in the *Salut Public* visited the house of La Villette, which contained more than 250 old people, and in the course of his visit he happened to ask the Superior how she could constantly meet so many wants. The good Mother confessed that there were moments of embarrassment, and that she was precisely in one of these difficulties. "This very morning," she said, "my flour merchant has sent me his bills; they come to a sum of 4,700 francs. The worst is that all this flour is used, and I have no money to pay for it. I have not 100 francs in the house." "What are you going to do?" said the writer. "I have told the Little Sisters to pray, and as a last resource the idea came to me to send a Sister to sell my bills. I have done it. The Sister is gone; she is in Lyons." The visitor laughed at

this proposal; so did the Mother, but she had done exactly what she said. A Little Sister, who collected broken food, had seen this good Mother examining papers with a troubled look. "What is the matter, my good Mother?" said she. The good Mother replied: "These bills are owing; I do not know how to pay for that flour. But I have an idea. You are going to Lyons; take my bills with you and sell them." "For how much must they be sold, my good Mother?" replied the Sister. "That is very simple," replied the Mother; "each one for the price marked on it." The Sister went and sold them. They could pay for the flour. The readers of the *Salut Public* also contributed to pay off the debts of the good Mother.

The house at Annonay had been established eight years; a piece of ground had been bought, one part of the establishment was built, and the old people filled it. The home, however, was poor and quite dependent upon Providence for its daily support; but they were accustomed to count upon the benefits of Heaven. Now they had no chapel; they asked for a plain one, and they knew how to be contented with little. The Little Sisters and the old people, being resolved to have the chapel, began by placing a stone and a plank before the statue of Saint Joseph, to make known their need; then, while appealing to their Holy Patron, the old men set themselves to dig and to prepare the site. When all was ready, except the money, they waited the agent of Providence. Mr. Marc Séguin, the celebrated engineer,

who had hardly ever come to the home, visited it on behalf of his pious and charitable wife, of the family of de Montgolfier. The open space attracted attention, he asked what it was for. Mr. Séguin went away, but some days after he came back, and said: "I undertake to have your chapel built, and I will direct the work." In June, 1866, the masons began the work under the direction of the great engineer, whose great age of eighty years did not hinder his coming regularly to the workshop. The chapel was finished and used for the worship of God, when one fine morning in the month of May, 1867, on coming out from Mass, the Little Sisters and old people saw on the ground a number of workmen digging foundations. It was Mr. Séguin who had given them this happy surprise and he undertook to finish the home at his own cost. There were conflicts of opinion between the engineer and the Little Sisters of the Poor—upholding the rights of art, the Sisters preferring arrangements in keeping with their customs. Mr. Marc Séguin said "no," at first, but afterwards yielded, and the refusal of modifications in his first reply ended regularly in a good-natured "We will do as you wish." When the Little Sisters tried to thank him, he almost became angry, and replied: "What I am doing is not much; I only give my goods and my time; but you, you give yourselves." Having thus become a fellow-worker with the Little Sisters of the Poor, the octogenarian had begun to take an interest in this work. One very cold wintry day, when the begging sisters went to his luxurious dwelling, he inspected

the mantles, robes, and aprons of the Little Sisters, and then exclaimed: "But I cannot any longer see you clothed so poorly in such weather as this, with clothes so worn that one can see through them." They knew what would be the outcome of these kind wishes:—the next day a large piece of black stuff reached the community.

Let us now speak of Nîmes, where, in 1867, a foundation was made. One could fancy oneself in the Middle Ages, the story is so full of simple piety. Our little chapel is on the second story, under the roof, above one dormitory, at the side of another, and opposite to the infirmary for men. Jesus is in the midst of the poor and suffering! It was they whom He loved when He lived amongst men. The dwelling He occupies is very narrow; it is as poor as the stable. The vestments and the vases are borrowed; even the chairs do not belong to us. O holy poverty, thou art the treasure brought from heaven to earth by the King Jesus. We share this treasure together—Jesus in His humble tabernacle, we in the privations of all kinds connected with the foundation. The Rev. Father d'Alzon,* Vicar-General, is coming to bless the little sanctuary and celebrate the holy mysteries there. At the voice of His minister, Jesus comes down, the little bell announces His arrival, every head bows. Behold Him there present, the desire of our hearts. Some priests and several benefactors are there. All our old people

* Founder of the Augustinians of the Assumption.

have prepared a throne for Him in the centre of their hearts; all range themselves at the Holy Table with a piety and a recollection which touches us. Our hearts are lifted up towards our Saviour in a transport of love. Our little chapel is gradually furnished. Some old vestments and altar cloths have been given to us. A good lady learns from the *Semaine Religieuse* that the Little Sisters of the Poor had been inaugurating a chapel; at once she thinks that the sacred vessels must be needed, and she has sent a chalice. Now that we have that precious vessel we are happy. But we are not satisfied. Our Lord is not able to come out of His prison of love to bless us; we want a monstrance. We address ourselves to our Lady; she so loves to see her Son honoured. The priest who hears the novena being made says: "What do you wish our Lady to give you for her festival?" "Reverend Father, we have asked her for a silver monstrance," "And do you believe our Lady will do this for you as soon as you ask it?" The good Mother, Auguste Paul, replied: "We believe our Lady will give it to us because we are in need of it, and also in order that our Lord may be more glorified." "As you have so much faith, I must help you to work the miracle; I am going to say a word about it in the *Semaine Religieuse*." The seventh day of the novena three ladies arrived at the house, saying: "Sisters, we have just seen in the *Semaine Religieuse* that you desire to have a monstrance for the Feast of the Assumption. We are afraid other people may forestall us. You shall have it." The following day

the three ladies arrived joyfully bringing the monstrance.

We now return to the beginning of the work, the source, to quote an official document which preserves the record of old traditions: "Meeting of the Municipal Council of Saint-Servan, May 28, 1866. Mr. Pointel, assistant to the Mayor, calls the attention of the Council to two much-frequented streets of the town. It appears to him preferable to give to the streets and squares names, which recall the important events of the country and the persons who have rendered the city illustrious by their virtues, their talents, or their glory. In the Rue Vigne au Chat is a charitable establishment founded by a saintly girl whose virtues, after having merited the prize Montyon, have excited the admiration of all France, in which those pious homes abound where the aged poor are received. Mr. Pointel believes that he anticipates the desires of all in asking the Council to substitute the name of 'Jeanne Jugan' for that of 'Vigne au Chat' for the street where the establishment of the Little Sisters of the Poor is situated." The record bears the signature of Mr. Guazon, Mayor, and seventeen municipal councillors. As a result of the discussion, a plate was put up in the street in question bearing the inscription, "Rue Jeanne Jugan." We owe to Mgr. Collet* a valuable piece of information on this subject: "One day this saintly girl came to me at the Tour to tell me

* Curate (1849-1861), afterwards parish priest (1865-1901), at Saint-Servan.

how deeply the Municipal Council had grieved her by giving her name to the street of the Little Sisters. This excellent religious besought me to exert my influence with the Council to have this street called 'Rue de la Providence,' or some other name. She was very much saddened when I told her that I could do nothing. She alone was ignorant of the part which she had taken in this great work, by which Christian charity has advanced another step."

The mother-house and the novitiate continued their establishment with success, and saw young Sisters of several nations—French, Belgians, Spanish, English, Irish, Scottish, etc.—pressing into their ranks, which gave to the Tour Saint-Joseph a very marked cosmopolitan character. They continued to improve the property. In the month of November, 1865, they had drained the large pond, from which, when the waters were low, there was danger of fevers; and whilst the men were doing the rough work, the Little Sisters, transformed into fisherwomen, used to catch the fishes by means of nets or by the hand. Now it is a green meadow, and the herd grazing in peace supply the staff of the establishment with milk and butter.

They were building the community house. Mr. and Mrs. Féburier* had visited the Tour Saint-Joseph several times. They loved its sweet peace and meditative calmness; they loved this novitiate, where young girls of so many nations came to form themselves for the religious life and to pass through

* See Chapter V.

the apprenticeship of the hospitaller life. In 1861 this lady wrote: "Being at the Tour, we assisted at the second Mass every day in the room which served as a chapel at that time; it grieved us to see how the Little Sisters were crowded together. There was not enough air. Every day, in order to go to Mass, we had to pass a little grass-covered hillock, on which they had placed a small plaster statue of Saint Joseph, saying that they had no means to build a chapel. Mr. Féburier and I were pained to see Saint Joseph there, on the ground, and God gave us the desire to help the Little Sisters to place him better and to begin a chapel, where they could hear Holy Mass in greater numbers, and perform the ceremonies of the Church more becomingly. Mr. Féburier said to me: 'We might give a sum at once, and also for a few years go on giving something.'"

The Superior-General accepted the project, but at the same time enlarged it, for they immediately thought of realizing the plan of the novitiate, and raising a church, rather than a chapel, on the spot which had become the centre of the Order. Providence had put in store on the property itself sand, stone, granite, which they thought of utilizing. At their request Mr. Mellet, the distinguished architect of Rennes, came again, and made the plan of the beautiful edifice in the Roman style, with interior galleries and arches. The Abbé Derval executed the plan and works with complete success. Mgr. Saint Marc, who had blessed the first stone on October 20, 1861, consecrated the chapel on Sep-

tember 5, 1869, having himself given the high altar as a lasting witness of his affection and esteem. People admired the building, the religious style and architectural elegance of which make the most favourable impression. The statue of Saint Joseph, 4 metres high, was now placed on a tower of white stone, 50 metres high, from which it towers over the community and the country, as though to protect and bless. Mr. and Mrs. Féburier returned once more and said: "We were very happy in the beautiful chapel, seeing these long files of Little Sisters walking in the greatest recollection, and in hearing their voices sing the praises of God."*

* After the death of her husband, which happened in Paris, October 26, 1873, and the removal of his body to the crypt of the chapel of La Tour, the pious widow became a Little Sister of the Poor under the name of Sister Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart. She died at the mother-house on April 18, 1877, and reposes in the cemetery of the community after twenty-three years of life as a religious.

It is to Mr. and Mrs. Féburier that the chapel is indebted for the relics of Saint Pacificus. Being in Rome, with the help of Rev. Father Alfieri, Superior-General of the Brothers of Saint John of God, they obtained the body of the martyr, which, with the phial of his blood, was taken from the catacombs of Saint Priscilla in 1819.

The translation was solemnly made on August 18, 1864, into a lateral chapel, where the holy martyr is venerated, while his example points to the way of sacrifice, and illustrates its reward. Since then the chapel has been enriched with reliquaries, precious to piety, which recall the examples and virtues of saints, and encourage the Little Sisters in their holy career.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DAUGHTERS OF PROVIDENCE

Benefactors—The meeting-place of misery and charity—The tradition of poverty in the chapels—Financial state of the institution—The law of Providence.

THIS history might also be entitled "Annals of Charity," for it is a narration of pure benevolence, in which the action of benefactors ceaselessly blend with those of the Sisters without the possibility of separating them, or even sometimes of distinguishing them. What was said of the Little Sisters in the early days is still to be said, namely, that the "little family" is composed of three elements—the Sisters, the old people, and the benefactors. Such are the characters of the drama constantly intermingled in the stories, more or less conspicuous according to circumstances, and all alike living in the land of charity.

As if the better to mark this characteristic of the hospitaller work, it was a tradition to commence foundations in indigence. The Little Sisters on the day of their arrival began by gathering straw to make mattresses; this was the starting-point. Then they set themselves to clean the place, and soon received the first aged poor; afterwards they obtained all from charity—utensils, provisions, furniture, clothing, money. This peculiar manner of

proceeding impressed the public, the old people, and the Sisters themselves, and left the field free for the action of Providence.

There is in this way of beginning a house a freshness and charm which is deeply affecting. The inhabitants of a town see a work arise where formerly nothing existed; in the founding and activity of the work they notice the charitable workers; they see the poor wretches who, coming from divers places, form a family of a kind different to all others; they feel that sorrows are consoled, and that the miserable are raised from their abjection. Benefactors are at once won over to the work; from the cooking-stove for the kitchen, bedding for the dormitory, linen for the infirmary, to the utensils for the wash-house—there is not a thing which is not the gift of charity. Already the hospitaller regimen is at work in the hospice with some old people used to the home, with newcomers who gradually fill the halls, the rooms, the garrets, the outbuildings, so long as there is yet room for one. Soon a spacious edifice must be built, but how many stones enter into its walls, and how many alms enter with them! If these stones, brought together in the harmony of a general sympathy, could but find a voice, they would proclaim the good works of the rich, and of the workers, of the great and of the humble of the earth. The asylum is indeed the place where misery and benevolence meet. Like two mountain-streams flowing from opposite directions they descend and mingle together in the peaceful valley below.

But will this patrimony of the poor, this capital

of the charity of which the congregation has taken possession, become personal property or real estate, and be turned into revenue? How do the Little Sisters administer it? Three documents will show us.

In 1854, following the approbation of the congregation by Rome, a general Chapter, comprising the Superiors of all the houses then existing, was held at Rennes. The tradition of poverty in the chapels was affirmed. They were to be kept with great cleanness and decency, but without luxury or objects of great value. Consequently, in the modest chapels of the Little Sisters of the Poor, neither gold nor silver nor precious metals nor valuable ornaments are seen. It is the poverty of the Franciscans adapted to the condition of the Little Sisters, harmonizing with the simplicity of the whole establishment, and bearing even in the sanctuary the distinctive mark of the hospitaller institution. This seal of religious poverty and simplicity prevents neither beauty of style nor decorum in the ceremonies, but it tones them down.

In 1862 the congregation of Bishops and Regulars (in a note dated from Rome, September 6, and signed by Cardinal Paracciani Clarelli as Prefect), having expressed some fears (after an examination of the accounts which had been submitted to it) concerning the debts of the hospitaller work, the following reply was sent from Rennes on October 28, 1862:

"These Sisters have bought and built when the entire Order possessed nothing, and they have taken

upon themselves the charge of the poor by hundreds before having the least guarantee for their own subsistence for the morrow. Since then their situation has improved from day to day. None of the debts which figure in the account have been contracted in order to provide for the expenses of a house while it was only projected. All represent balances, the terms of which have not yet expired, to be paid either for houses purchased or for new buildings. The debts in each house are compensated for by a value in real estate superior to their amount. The Sisters are loved everywhere, and their benefactors do not grow tired of helping them. None of the constructions or purchases which have been made in any of the houses of the congregation have been made without the express authorization of the Bishop, and consequently nothing has been done against the intentions of the rule and the counsels of prudence."

Let us watch the growth of the hospitaller organization. This view will not be without interest for the observer who loves to study the manifestations of life in its works, under whatever form they are produced. The final decision, of which the germ was contained in the first hospice, was taken in 1865 under circumstances which must now be related.

Up to that date settled incomes, either temporary or perpetual, in aid of the establishment and maintenance of the houses, for the endowment of beds, or for Masses, were not altogether refused. The little work of Saint-Servan, as we have often said,

waited for the teaching of experience, and evolved its essential principles successively before formulating them as laws in its constitutions. To illustrate the point with which we are occupied, let us take the most striking example. The parish priest of Saint-Sulpice had founded the house of Notre Dame des Champs at Paris. Here is the continuation of his statement*: "Where could the money be found to erect the buildings on this land? A noble lady came to me and proposed to contribute towards the expense by giving 4,000 francs for the endowment of a bed in the future home. This proposition was like a ray of light to me. Having accepted it, I told my parishioners of it, and a few days after thirty of them had each remitted to me 4,000 francs." There were then, here and there, some settled revenues or endowments, although they were but few in number and exceptional.

The Comte de Berton, who applied himself like a devoted friend to the collection of legacies made to the establishments of Little Sisters of the Poor, gave the warning on May 22, 1865. He called attention to the consequences which the acceptance of assured incomes would infallibly bring about, both with respect to the freedom of the administration of the homes and to the spirit of the institution itself. As the legacy of the Gallanti family was under discussion he concluded: "If you permit me humbly to give my advice, you ought not to accept it, except it be with authority to alienate the income to serve

* See Chapter X.

for a capital sum wherewith to pay for your house. You ought to possess only the house and land you inhabit, and for the rest to live upon daily charity. If the Little Sisters were reputed to have settled incomes, they would lose their right to that charity which kept the Israelites alive in the desert, and if they once hoarded the manna, that manna would corrupt in their hands, as it formerly happened to the people of God."

The ideas and sentiments expressed in the official note of M. de Berton corresponded exactly with the ideas and sentiments which prevailed in the congregation. After having profoundly reflected, and weighed the reasons for and against in prevision of the future, they took counsel of several Bishops —notably of the Archbishops of Rennes and of Paris, who gave the same advice—and then the council-general of the congregation,* assembled by the Superiors-General, expressed its opinion.

The decision was given on June 19, 1865, and it was notified to the houses of the institution "that the congregation cannot possess any yearly income or fixed revenue in perpetual title, and consequently we must refuse all legacies or gifts consisting of yearly incomes, or to which the endowment of beds or of Masses is attached, or any other obligation which would demand perpetuity." The decision gave as reasons: "(1) The detriment to holy poverty,

* The Council was composed of Sisters Pauline, Marie de la Conception, Marie-Gertrude, Marie de la Croix, Lucie-Marie, Raphael, Noémi, Véronique-Thérèse, and Marie de Saint-Joseph.

which is our strength, for from the moment that our houses possess incomes, they will subsist upon their revenues without the help of begging; (2) the endowment of beds or of Masses would be a burden upon our houses, and further, would constitute an income." The same day Sister Marie-Augustine de la Compassion, the Superior-General, laid before His Excellency the Minister of Justice and Worship the following considerations: "If, on the one hand, the Little Sisters cannot provide for the lodging and maintenance of the old people confided to their care without the concurrence of the generous gifts and legacies which come to them from charitable people, on the other hand, it is contrary to the spirit of the congregation, as well as to the precepts of its spiritual rule, to accept any fixed and permanent revenues, such as Government annuities. With this in view, the Superior-General, with the advice of her council, has decided that, while reserving the power to accept, with the authorization of the Government, the capital sums given or bequeathed to the congregation, sums which might be employed either for the foundation of new asylums, or for the purchase or construction of hospices already founded, or for their enlargement when circumstances require it, or their improvement, or furnishing, etc., she, nevertheless, cannot accept gifts and legacies consisting of permanent incomes, either from the State or private individuals. Therefore," etc.

On January 31, 1886, the French Government declared favourably: "We have decreed, and do decree as follows: Article I. The decision, dated

June 19, 1865, is approved by which the Council of Administration of the hospitaller Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor, recognized at Rennes by our decree of January 9, 1856, has declared that it renounces the legacy of a sum of 4,000 francs made by Miss Borgnis Gallanti, in order to endow a bed at the establishment of the Sisters of this Order existing in Paris, Rue Notre Dame des Champs, in virtue of our decree of May 3, 1860. Consequently, our decree of September 17, 1864, which authorized the Superior-General of the Little Sisters of the Poor to accept this legacy, conjointly with the Director of the Administration of the Assistance Publique of Paris, is repealed. On behalf of the Emperor, the Keeper of the Seals, J. Baroche."

This decision, which deprived the hospitaller institution of the power of becoming fund-holders, was taken when it was in the twenty-sixth year of its existence, and was received with entire consent by all the Little Sisters of the time. It forms one of the golden pages in their history.

CHAPTER XVII

THE HOME FOR THE AGED

Considerations on old age—Impressions of a visitor—Physical and moral assistance—Virtues of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

MEN, at great expense, gather together in glorious museums specimens of all the products of the universe; the learned never tire of making profound or recreative studies of them, which they publish in academic or popular reviews to which the art of illustration lends its aid. Under less brilliant conditions, the hospitaller work of the Little Sisters of the Poor can sustain the comparison as a branch of anthropology; it contains, indeed, an incomparable collection, living and speaking, of old age with its varied types, its progressive phases, and its decadent forms from green old age to utter decrepitude. It is true that man has a horror of his own destruction, and of what reminds him too much of the course of Nature; and consequently this study is less attractive and pleasant than that of the greater part of the workings of Nature. Nevertheless, we must not forget that old age has inspired the Dominican with one of his masterpieces, in the celebrated painting of the "Last Communion" of St. Jerome, in which the eye rests long upon that worn and weakened body, that head still intellectual and noble in decay, those arms which weakness holds down and renders

the will powerless to raise them towards heaven, in spite of the glow within the soul and the ardour in the eyes.

From this point of view the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor offers a vast field of study: here the strong old man, in the dignity of age, with his faculties well preserved, his limbs free, his hair white, and his eye firm and bright; there the old man bent double, without sight, without voice, almost powerless and without memory, dragging himself painfully along and stopping every moment to breathe or cough; and between the two every intermediate stage.

Look at this group: here is a woman seated at a table on which is placed a parcel of woollen things which she is mending. One would think she was in perfect health, so animated are her features, so active her hands, so sensible her conversation; but no! she has lost the use of her lower limbs, and has to be wheeled about in a chair. One of her companions arises, walks, her limbs tremble . . . she stops to speak, her head shakes, her voice shakes . . . she sits down to take a little nourishment, and her hand shakes. Another woman with a placid face sits, unoccupied, upon a chair, absorbed in a day-dream. Speak to her of her past life, a fleeting light seems to illumine her face; then again the look becomes vacant, the word dies upon her lips. The bodily organs are intact, but the brain is empty, and thought has fled. By the side of them is a person whose look of benevolence is remarkable; she watches over her companions, and renders them little

services. Everything about this woman is worthy of reverence, and it can be seen that misfortune alone has brought her low; she assists the sister, and helps her in her household work.

The visitor who enters for the first time one of the large homes for the poor, whether at Paris, London, Madrid, or Brussels, and who has in mind the idea of old age and of assistance by means of public alms-seeking, cannot avoid an impression of surprise. Can the large building, with its court-yards, the hundreds of people who inhabit it, the air of cleanliness and convenience which reigns in it, be the possible result of daily alms, of small gifts, of leavings and of things which other people can no longer use? And this spacious hall, with the windows which admit both light and air, its lofty white walls, is it not rather an assembly-room? And these hundreds of men, who on Sundays and festivals come and go clothed like gentlemen, chat gaily together like people who feel perfectly at home, and play or read, are they not rather the members of a club? Indeed, in these large towns many of the old men are fallen gentlemen; others are workmen, once clever at their trade; others hotel-waiters, etc.; and their clothes are the left-off garments of the rich families of the town, done up by the Little Sisters and made to fit the old men. The mind has some difficulty in associating the result obtained with the thought of the somewhat hazardous subsistence on alms; then, if the visitor speaks to the Little Sister of his misgiving, she

shakes her head, and replies with a smile, "It is Providence."

But where are the invalid, infirm, and sick old people? They occupy another part of the establishment called the infirmaries, where they are placed in order to receive special care, and to study each special case. They have a room suitably heated and ventilated according to the season, with access to the gallery where they can walk and breathe the fresh air; they keep each other company, play and chat together, or do some little work for the sake of employing themselves; they go to bed earlier, they get up later; they are fed with lighter food, and clothed more warmly. Some of them are able to come downstairs and take a turn in the garden.

In the sleeping-room, covered with white counterpanes, the very infirm repose. They sit up for several hours daily for comfort and cleanliness, for change of air, or for company. They sit in armchairs, to which they are sometimes tied, for fear they should slip and fall, for already life has left their numbed and paralyzed limbs, and their chilled and feeble blood no longer warms their extremities. When the weather is propitious they are wheeled into the infirmary hall and under the gallery. During this time the sleeping-room is ventilated, cleaned, and put in order. Some have but a confused memory, and seem unconscious of what is passing around them. They have entered upon second childhood; they weep without reason, they laugh without cause; their tears, whether of laughter or of grief, must be wiped away; their wants must

be anticipated; they must be consoled by a kind word or attention, sometimes with some material gift; their religion must be reduced to the devotions of little children. Here the self-devotion of the Sisters of the infirmary becomes almost motherly, and in truth, for the feeble old man sinking into the grave, religion has created mothers; but by the side of the Sister, the old infirmarian, instructed by her, and moved also by a spirit of self-sacrifice, aids her, and renders certain services.

If now the mind turns to moral considerations, the hospitaller work opens a new field of study. "How many of these poor folks arrive at the asylum broken down by the sufferings of life, by trials of heart and mind? How many are there because debtors without honour have ruined them, or because children without love have abandoned them in the hour of need? How many have known domestic griefs, the injustice of Fate, and the estrangement of friends? And who does not know that mental pains are the keenest and deepest? These irritations must be assuaged, these griefs be soothed; forgetfulness of injuries must be induced, even reconciliations brought about. Again, how many bear the heavy burden of a useless life, a life of failure, perhaps a life of guilt, or despair? Fresh courage must be given, and moral sense awakened, the conscience set in motion, to bring about a personal transformation and place them on the way to heaven. The problem of conversion has manifold data and phases: it is above all others the

moral and religious problem. Gradually the painful memories are appeased, the black melancholy disappears, calm re-enters the soul, and serenity reappears upon the countenance. One is often struck, on visiting the asylum, with this peaceful gaiety, this freedom from care, and this enjoyment, which reminds one of another age, and which seems to become quite natural to the inmates of the house. In these establishments, where one would think that sadness and disenchantment would reign, is found a gentle and Christian joy, the blossom of a good conscience and of health of soul."*

This assistance for old age is founded on the knowledge of the human heart, and shows what great influence moral joys as well as pains have upon the happiness or misery of life; but to attain its objects, it requires a staff of Sisters truly devoted to their vocation and of a deep virtue. The religious virtues are indeed the strength and the guarantee of the hospitaller virtues. It is not enough to raise the material edifice: a soul must be placed within that body, the soul of the Little Sister of the Poor, with its specific qualities of faith and generosity, of devotion and self-abandonment, of simplicity and humility, of modesty and divine love.

In their turn, the hospitaller virtues inspire the religious virtues, direct their application, and form "wise women." The wise woman of our sacred

* These quotations are taken from the book of the author, "Au Pays de la Charité" ("In the Land of Charity"). French and English editions at Mr. Paillart's, Abbeville, France.

books watches over her house to keep it in order, to provide for it, and to distribute the work; she puts on her working-dress, and puts her hand to the work; she rises early in the morning; she secures garments and clothing for all; she is calm in action, self-possessed in difficulties; she has practical knowledge of beneficence; her works are her praise; and her beauty is in the dignity of her life. It is thus that self-devotion becomes professional and has been raised by religion to the state of a social institution.

Whilst passing through the great hospice, with its departments for men and women, the visitor may ask how it is that the Little Sisters are able to govern these many people, and to maintain good order. In presence of the result obtained it is easy for him to appreciate the force of moral influence and of the rule exercised in the home. Here is the opinion of one of these visitors: "The idea of a family is that which sums up the impressions of a searching visit to the home of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and it is the one that I have always heard of it. A strange family if you like, for here it is the old who are directed, and it is the youngest, those modest virgins, who have founded and who provide the food for the domestic hearth; yet a family in the cordiality which reigns between all its members, in the absolute self-devotion of the nuns, and in the attachment of the old people to the young mothers of their last days. The sight of this interior not only inspires a sentiment of respect, it also suggests

salutary thoughts of humility. When one considers what these Sisters do, how from the age of twenty years they consecrate their whole lives to the service of poor and unknown old men and women, bestowing on them the most assiduous cares—cares sometimes most repugnant to human nature—he feels very small before God and before his own conscience."

SECOND PART

IN THE TWO HEMISPHERES

CHAPTER XVIII

IN ENGLAND AND IN IRELAND

Voluntary contributions—Poor-rates—A tract—In the Black Country—A sociologist's witness—First foundation in Ireland.

THANKS to the generous efforts of the friends of the hospitaller work, the two houses in London were successfully and definitely established. One of the establishments was transferred to the district of South Lambeth on October 13, 1863, the other to Portobello Road on June 7, 1865, in grounds advantageously acquired outside of the zone actually invaded by the buildings of the immense Metropolis. They equally succeeded in Manchester by purchasing, under the feudal form of a lease of 999 years, the possession of a property situated in Plymouth Grove, and in organizing, in order to meet the first expenses, a charity sale, which produced £1,600. The institution of the Little Sisters of the Poor had thus in the eyes of the public certain responsibilities from the very fact that these establishments were rooted in the country.

On the other hand, the genius of English charity offered important elements of assimilation. In the first place, the English naturally love to found and support hospices and hospitals by means of private initiative and voluntary contributions, under the

form of donations and collections. The Sisters, therefore, tried begging in London, but on May 6, 1863, the police thought proper to arrest the Little Sisters for so doing, and to bring them before the magistrate, who prohibited their begging, and threatened them with prison in case of a repetition of the offence. This particular case brought to light the fact that twenty other institutions in the capital were supported in the same way, and in reality it was a question of common liberty. The newspapers of all shades took up the discussion; meetings gave their opinions; several members of Parliament prepared a question to the Government. The contest ended in an acknowledgement of the common right, and in apologies on the part of the police; so that it was recognized that no legal opposition could be made to the free exercise of the work of benevolence of the Little Sisters of the Poor in the British Empire.

In the second place, the poor-rate constitutes in the British Empire a regular tax, and is levied in proportion to the number of poor. The result is that the tax-payers have a direct and immediate interest that the number of poor admitted to the workhouse should be diminished as much as possible; consequently the enterprise of the Little Sisters of the Poor does not so much constitute an expense for the locality, as an alleviation of the public charges. Many merchants and manufacturers, moved by this consideration, apart from all religious motives, willingly give their contributions to the home for the aged, and sometimes reply to the begging

Sisters in the language of finance: "You have so many poor; we will give you so much."

At the time of which we are speaking, the Little Sisters of the Poor had to make their way as nuns, in the dress of their Order. One can judge of this difficulty from the events which took place in the history of the town of Plymouth. After the Reformation, for 300 years, Catholicism was abolished in the district. A priest called John Guilbert, an *émigré* during the French Revolution, obtained permission to live unmolested in the town. He erected there a chapel, in which he celebrated the first Mass on December 20, 1807, in the midst of a group of the faithful and of some converts. The chapel continued to be used for worship until the erection of a church in 1858. It was then used for Catholic schools, which were afterward removed elsewhere; finally in 1865 a home for old people was established in it. In this way the Little Sisters of the Poor took an active part in the re-establishment of Catholic works in the country, and as their manner of living constrained them to appear abroad, the surprise of the inhabitants on seeing the nuns in the streets had every opportunity of manifesting itself, but without hindering the work of the charitable enterprise. As the habit of the Little Sisters is very simple—and covered by their large cloaks—they passed more unobserved than many religious whose dress was more conspicuous.

To make their work known, and to interest the charitable people of the country, they followed a custom adopted in the kingdom, and distributed

a tract entitled, "The Little Sisters of the Poor, —— Street." The same pamphlet was distributed in all their houses in England and Scotland. It ran thus: "The Institution of the Little Sisters of the Poor was founded in 1840 at Saint-Servan in Brittany. The object of this charitable institution is to provide homes for the aged poor of both sexes, to feed and clothe them, and to minister to all their wants. They have no funds or income whatever. They support the old people under their care by whatever public charity affords them, collecting alms daily from house to house in money, scraps of food, old clothing, or anything that may be offered to them. This work has gradually spread over France, Belgium, Spain, England, and Scotland; and the Little Sisters have now numerous houses, containing several thousands of old and infirm poor. The houses of the Little Sisters are open at all times to visitors, and, notwithstanding that the institution is Catholic, no distinction is made as regards admission. Provided the applicants are destitute, respectable, old people, incapable of gaining their own livelihood, and have no one to gain it for them, they are fit subjects for the houses of the Little Sisters of the Poor."

A few quotations will show the state of affairs. The Mother Superior wrote from Bristol in 1866: "Amongst the Protestants there are but a small number who receive us unkindly, for if they do not approve of our religion, they cannot condemn our charity towards the unfortunate; therefore, when they come to visit our home, we are sure that they

will respect us, and generally they become our friends and benefactors. For instance, five or six young girls lately came with scornful faces to make fun of us. But, after having visited the house, looked at our old people, and put several questions as to our manner of life, they returned quite changed, and sent us some wine for our sick. A Protestant gentleman also came and asked to be allowed to visit every part of the house. After he had been shown what was customary, he asked to visit the apartments of the Sisters, which was accorded as a favour. Noticing that we slept in garrets and in beds poorly furnished, and that we worked gratuitously, he was so touched that he was most eager to write an article in the paper about it. The consequence was that several butchers and fishmongers, who before shut their doors against us, afterwards received us and became our benefactors."

In Birmingham, in order to extend the work, the obligation of paying in advance for a very heavily taxed property, situated in the midst of the town, caused the Sisters to undertake an expedition into the country. The Little Sisters travelled over that great industrial country whose innumerable factories and chimneys have caused it to be named "the Black Country," on account of the smoke which is for ever being given off, and which blackens everything—the sky, earth, houses, trees, and plants. They went on to Wolverhampton, Leamington, Warwick, and as far as the Potteries, in their religious habit, being assured that their work of

assisting the aged would awaken some sympathy. "We noticed," they wrote, "that in places where there was no convent, we were very much more tormented by the children, and even by the grown-up people. Sometimes two or three passers-by stopped to see us come out of a shop, and in a few instants attracted such a great number of others that we were compelled to take the first small side street in order to get out of their sight, and thus disperse the crowd. Then we returned to recommence begging where we had left off. We begged from door to door as in Birmingham, which attracts the attention of the curious more, but is also more to our profit, because many persons would refuse if they did not see the names of their neighbours written on our subscription-book. Generally we found everybody kind to us, and if the offerings were not large (the most notable being £5), this was compensated by the number of those who gave. Need seemed to make us intrepid and indefatigable. When on our begging expeditions people refused us money, we asked for furniture, thread, wool, pieces of stuff, soap. If people excused themselves, saying that we could not carry all that, we hastened to show the sacks or baskets with which we were supplied. It is true we were often very heavily burdened, but what a joy it was to bring our little provisions to the house and to unpack them during recreation, when we arrived in time! We did not forget to thank God for deigning thus to bless our little sacrifices, and we used to exclaim: 'Oh, how good God is to us!' and this encouraged both

those who had to go out the next day, and those who remained at home." In conclusion, weekly subscriptions of the workmen of Birmingham amounted to £700, the savings-box* supplied the handsome gift of £300, and the rest was borrowed.

The two new foundations, Leeds, December 27, 1865, and Newcastle-on-Tyne, August 20, 1866, established in great industrial centres, showed what progress the hospitaller institution had already made in the public opinion, and what a sympathetic welcome people began to give them. The Lord Mayor of Leeds contributed £20 to the home for the old people at the time of the acquisition of the ground, which was equivalent to a recommendation, considering that he was a Protestant and that his act was recorded in the papers. In Newcastle the clergy stuck the printed tract on the doors of the churches and read it from the pulpits, which brought many visits and some small gifts to the newly-founded home. In every place and among all classes charity brings people nearer together, because it is the fraternity of Christ, benevolent to all

The undertaking, nevertheless, brought heavy responsibilities, as it was necessary to build free hospices, each capable of containing two or three hundred old people who had been in misery. It had the sympathies and co-operation of the great English Catholic families, but they were overcharged with work—building of churches, establishment of schools, support of orphanages, etc.

* See p. 175.

At this period every institution, using its proper means and pursuing its particular object, contributed to the general movement for the re-establishment of Catholicism. For their part, the Little Sisters of the Poor had their place in this great army, with the mission to maintain the position of Catholic charity in face of the Dissenters, and to prove by their social works what faith can do in the service of charity.

In January, 1867, Cardinal Manning came to plead the cause of the Little Sisters in Birmingham before a Catholic and Protestant audience. The appreciation of a prelate well versed in social questions is a moral and historical witness of great value. "It is my duty to ask you for your alms for the support and extension of the hospice founded by the Little Sisters of the Poor. How is the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor maintained? By charity—solely and absolutely by alms. Like the birds of the air, they live only from the gifts which every day fall from the hand of our heavenly Father. No, I do not believe there is a work which shows greater faith in the goodness of God, and which, in the face of our century and our country—both so confident in their resources, in their wisdom, and in human prudence—testifies in a more striking manner to the great law of Christian life, the law of giving one's self up to the providence of our Father who is in heaven. There is no possible explanation to these miracles of charity except through the action of the Holy Spirit, who can alone inspire to such work. Show me anywhere mercenary charity

accomplishing similar things; show me a product of the science and of the genius of human legislation, thus springing from the heart of feebleness and poverty, to spread itself afar with this irresistible expansion of Christian charity!" Let us add to these words, in order to show his opinion of the Sisters, that the illustrious Archbishop of Westminster used to call them in those troubled times "my little keys," because, penetrating into regions and families where priests could not yet enter, they opened the door to Catholic influence. These things, true at one time, cease to be so when the surroundings are notably modified.

The time had come to cross St. George's Channel. The same persons who had introduced the hospitaller work into Scotland in 1862 were appointed to introduce it into Ireland in 1868. Mr. Thiébault and his cousin, the Abbé Lelièvre, won over Bishop O'Brien, of Waterford, to the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and a foundation was decided upon in that town. The congregation for its future development and recruitment desired to have establishments in Ireland, seeing that the Irish element was widely spread in all countries where English is spoken, and that this nation has deserved well of the Church for its constancy in the faith.

The good Mother Saint-Joseph had the honour of making this first foundation in a house hired in Adelphi Terrace, at the annual rent of £50, and she there installed Sister Honoria, who was named

Superior, together with a few Sisters. The house was very convenient for its purpose although empty, but the Bishop came and blessed the new establishment, provided the altar and the necessary ornaments for the worship of God. A lady who lived near provided meals and necessities for the first days; visits and gifts came in great numbers, and the household increased. It is worthy of note, first, that a woman of a hundred years old was the first person received by the Little Sisters of the Poor in Ireland; secondly, that, when the two little begging Sisters appeared in the market of Waterford, the policeman on duty, who happened to be without money, went and borrowed from one of the tradeswomen, and gave his offering to the Sisters; thirdly, that the Sisters brought from the market a good store of vegetables and a sum of ten shillings in coppers, whilst a butcher, who had taken the basket of the Sisters and gone himself round the stalls, had the heavy basket brought home to the Sisters' abode by his shopman; fourthly, that the most magnificent gift was a horse sent by the pupils at the College of Rockwell, but such a fine one that the Little Sisters, not daring to make use of such a fine animal, exchanged it for a pony, a cart, and a kitchen stove, and still had a balance of £8.

At Waterford the first stage of the foundation was secured. The question was how to provide the second—that is to say, how to obtain a suitable piece of ground, and to raise upon it, little by little, the hospitaller establishment. Such is, indeed, at all

times and in all countries, the problem of foundation. From the general point of view, the first stage of the hospitaller congregations had been happily surmounted, and the benevolent institution, borne upon the sympathetic current of humanity, was about to extend itself beyond Europe, and make the tour of the globe. Let us follow it in its new career.

CHAPTER XIX

THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR IN AMERICA (1868-1872)

Plan of organization—The emigrants of charity—The foundation in Brooklyn—Thirteen foundations within four years in the principal centres of the United States—In the country of liberty.

THE Gospel, in graceful and expressive imagery, compares the growth of the kingdom of God to a grain of mustard seed. At the beginning it is but a very small seed, but it has such a virtue of development that it grows like a tree, extends its branches abroad, and offers a shelter to the birds of heaven. This symbol is always true, and the comparison is equally applicable to the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor. The mustard seed sown at Saint-Servan in 1839 developed marvellously; it had grown as a tree, and its branches spread on divers sides. The Superiors-General who had seen it start and grow desired to see new developments. The work then counted 107 houses, 1,750 Sisters, and it sheltered 13,000 old people; also the general Chapter of the congregation which was held at La Tour Saint-Joseph in 1868 entered into their views, and decided upon the foundations of establishments in America.

Previously, in the month of May, the Abbé Ernest Lelièvre had been commissioned to prepare the way, and had embarked in Ireland. At the moment of

leaving Europe he had received these encouraging lines from Cardinal Monaco: "I have not neglected to inform the Holy Father of your journey, and of the scheme of founding houses of the Little Sisters of the Poor in the United States. His Holiness approves heartily the development of that deserving congregation, and blesses it. Rome, May 7, 1868." On the boat which conveyed him he arranged his plan as follows: "I intended to go to New Orleans at once; but the further I advance, the more I see that it is necessary to make a foundation in the North at the same time as in the South." Heartily welcomed by Bishop Odin, it was agreed that the Little Sisters of the Poor should open the home for the aged in New Orleans when the great heat was over. The scheme was completed. "I explained to his lordship that the Sisters would come to New York about September, that I was going to prepare a foundation either in New York or in one of the large neighbouring cities, and, if possible, another halfway between." Such was the basis of operation.

It was necessary to obtain the required authorizations in order to erect the first establishment of the Little Sisters of the Poor in the great port which connects the United States with Europe through the line of steamboats and the mail service. For that purpose interviews with the Bishops took place on July 13, and the attorney sent this message: "The Archbishop of New York has requested time for reflection; the Bishop of Brooklyn has given his consent to the immediate erection of one of our

houses." The decision of Bishop Loughlin permitted the realization of the scheme under the best conditions, and he placed himself at the head of the benefactors of the work in the United States.

One serious difficulty seemed to prejudice the establishment of the congregation in several important towns. Some Franciscan Sisters, who came from Germany some years before, had established themselves there and had prospered; they had adopted the popular name of Little Sisters of the Poor, as yet unused in the country, and also begged for the poor. It was necessary to prevent any misunderstanding. An incident describes the situation. The delegate had been cordially received at Baltimore by the Sulpicians who keep the great seminary, and Mr. Dubreuil, the venerated Superior, presented him to the Vicar-General of the diocese. "The Superior announced that I was the procurator of the Little Sisters of the Poor. The Vicar-General said: 'He arrived just at the right time; the Archbishop has taken proceedings to obtain a foundation.' 'Of what Sisters?' I asked. 'Are there others?' replied the Vicar-General. Explanations followed, and by the help of the letter from Cardinal Monaco Bishop Spalding, Archbishop of Baltimore, decided what line of conduct to adopt. The next day the Vicar-General gave the decision in these businesslike terms: 'We prefer the true article to the imitation.' Bishop Spalding added: 'When can you send us five Sisters?' and he made known that resources were prepared for making a good foundation in the most Catholic city in the United States. Then the con-

versation became more animated. The Archbishop asked: 'Do you intend to found several houses in America?' The delegate replied: 'Yes, my lord.' The Bishop replied: 'There are many great towns in America where your work would do good, but you cannot go into all of them.' Those present assented. The delegate continued: 'Allow me, my lord, to tell you one fact. When I left Rome six years ago, I asked Cardinal Barnabò for his approbation for the two foundations which we hoped to make in England. "I permit you," replied the Cardinal, "and not only to found two, but thirteen." So greatly did the permission of the Cardinal exceed our ambition that I laughed; nevertheless, when I left England they were occupied on the thirteenth foundation in the United Kingdom. The Cardinal had said the number thirteen because it is the number of the dioceses in England.' 'Wonderful!' replied the Archbishop. 'In that case we want forty-two foundations in the United States, for that is the actual number of our dioceses. I challenge you to effect them.'"

The idea had been to place the house halfway between the North and the South, at Cincinnati—a town important on account of its population and its commerce—and some measures formerly taken by a lady of influence in the country had caused this hope to be entertained. It was found that the position had been occupied by the Sisters of whom we were speaking, and confusion between two works having apparently the same title seemed inevitable. Rev. Father Hecker, founder of the Paulists, who

lent his help to the establishment of the Little Sisters of the Poor in the United States, under the circumstances, used his influence with Mrs. Sarah Peter, daughter of a Governor of Ohio, who herself negotiated the foundation with the Archbishop of Cincinnati, Bishop Purcell, and things took a very satisfactory turn.

The time for realizing the plans had arrived. The mother-house had approved and ratified the scheme and the engagements of its attorney. A first colony, consisting of seven Little Sisters, left La Tour Saint-Joseph on August 28, 1868, the Feast of St Augustine, in the midst of emotion and blessings from the older Sisters and friends of the work. It was an event of the first importance to the congregation. The Superior-General accompanied her generous daughters as far as Brest. She saw them embark on the steamer *Napoleon III*, August 31, 1868; then left them to the protection of God. The Little Sisters of the Poor set foot on American soil at New York on Sunday, September 13, at six o'clock in the evening.

The following Wednesday they opened their first home, which comprised three houses, rented in Dekalt Avenue, in Brooklyn. The family Boyer-Parmentier, half German, half Belgian, rendered them service in material matters, and the Fathers de la Miséricorde —especially the Rev. Father Lafont—in spiritual things. Rev. Father Hecker remitted them twenty dollars, the first alms in money which they received in the United States. On September 20 they wel-

comed their first old pensioner, a woman eighty-two years of age. The foundation was made, and the delegate wrote to the mother-house: "The public appear delighted to see that the Little Sisters of the Poor are willing to work for the poor; that they ask no endowment; that they desire to trust in Providence and in the generosity of the public. Neither the population of New York nor of Brooklyn seem to be roused on seeing the habit of the Little Sisters; I have not even seen the shadow of a hostile demonstration."

The second colony disembarked at New York on October 8. It had for head the Assistant-General, Marie de la Conception, whom they generally called in the Order "Good Mother Foundation," on account of her wonderful aptitude for this work, and the number of foundations which she had established. No one, at this period, was more able to impress upon the new houses of America the primitive spirit of the hospitaller work, and this was a providential choice. The colony was destined for Cincinnati, where the new hospitaller Sisters arrived on Wednesday, October 14; they opened their home in a building formerly used for a school, near the cathedral. The pupils of the Sisters of Notre Dame, informed by their teachers of the devotedness and poverty of the Little Sisters of the Poor, told their parents about it, and then went to the home, every-one carrying her little parcel. The Little Sisters offered the medical care of the aged to a Catholic doctor. This worthy man, after the first consultation, took off his coat, and handed it to one of

the Sisters to clothe a poor old man. The Archbishop came in his turn, and was moved on seeing the humble refectory of the Sisters. A picture of our Lord and cards on either side were fastened up with pins, one table and two old rickety benches —that was all the furniture. "As for ourselves," the Assistant-General said, "we found it very nice, and, above all, very convenient, because we could at least observe the rule; that was all we desired."

The third colony disembarked at New Orleans, December 19, 1868. What drew the attention of the Little Sisters was not so much the greatness and beauty of the town, the immense river, the climate which knows no winter, and the tropical flowers, as the house on which they read, "Home of Saint-Joseph." The charitable ladies of the city had undertaken a work there for widows and old people, of which the result had not been very satisfactory; therefore the Little Sisters had been invited to take it over. The establishment was given over to them on the condition of transforming it into a house for the aged poor, and of maintaining it according to their own system. A week sufficed to effect the transformation, and from January, 1869, the Home of Saint-Joseph became a true home of the Little Sisters of the Poor, under the direction of the good Mother Marie Claire, to the keen satisfaction of Bishop Odin and the population. The municipality, on the proposition of Mr. d'Hémicourt, gave an unequivocal proof of this by paving, at its own expense, the street which gave access to the establishment, and by voting an allowance of

1,000 dollars to pay for the repairs and improvement of the estate.

The mission of charity of which we have just spoken did not escape the vigilant eye of the Holy See. A document, emanating from the Propaganda, came to encourage the goodwill of the Catholics:

"To the Abbé Lelièvre,

"Reverend Father, your letter of December 6 last has been remitted to me, and I was very pleased to learn the zeal you show in extending also in the United States of America the institution of the Little Sisters for the relief of the poor, and the fruit your works have borne hitherto. It pleased me still more to learn from the same letter how, not only the Bishops, but also all the Catholics have received the said Sisters with all benevolence. Whilst, therefore, I rejoice and congratulate you with all my heart, I do not forget to exhort you still to pursue with greater zeal and joy the work commenced, and to continue to merit more and more of Holy Church. His Holiness, to whom your desires have been transmitted, at the audience of the 3rd instant, has deigned to accord his most hearty apostolic blessing—the presage of all good—to you first, and then to all the Little Sisters, for whom you plead equally.

"Your very devoted

"Al. Cardinal Barnabò.

"Rome, Palace of the S. Congregation of the Propaganda,

"*January* 7, 1869."

A legacy, made by a lady in favour of the widows of Baltimore, was the first contribution to the funds for the home for the old people, where the Little Sisters never cease to receive widows and widowers, considering that their old age has known every kind of family sorrow—deserted hearths, losses by death, isolation, or desertion. Whilst the committee disposed of the funds by purchasing a piece of ground in an elevated situation near to the Church of Saint John, the Sisters arrived on April 6, 1869, and commenced their work in a hired house in Calvert Street. The great seminary gave its broken meats and its moral support. Bishop Spalding said: "The Little Sisters of the Poor are called to do a great deal of good in America, not only among the poor, but also among the rich; for words no longer suffice—works are necessary."

The great city of Saint Louis, situated at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri, between the East and the West of the United States, presented a desirable situation with reference to the establishments already made, and those about to be made, and Archbishop Henrick had favourably received the proposal. The fifth colony was then directed towards Saint Louis, where it was received in gracious hospitality by the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, who wished to offer the objects necessary to furnish the humble chapel of the Little Sisters. The latter took possession, Monday, May 3, of four adjoining houses which they had rented. This was a foundation of the same kind as in Europe. "What are you going to do in a house where there is

nothing?" people said. "Wait a few days; we will have the most necessary things brought in." We replied that we always commenced in holy poverty, and that Providence provided for all our needs. The Little Sisters left the Convent of the Sacred Heart, each carrying a parcel. They knelt down in the house which had become theirs; then they began to clean it, and to arrange the objects as the good people brought them in. Let us enumerate them. A joiner set up a temporary altar, and made them a present of it; a German merchant brought a stove, boilers, and utensils for the kitchen; a shopkeeper, of whom they asked a small washing-tub, sent them a dozen, with as many pails; another gave two dozen brooms; another a dozen chairs, etc. Charity was stirred, and provided the household of the Little Sisters and of the aged. Subsequently Bishop Ryan often used to say, "Do you know that the Little Sisters are very original in their manner of proceeding? I knew them when they arrived, and had not even straw to lie on. I, in all simplicity, and having great pity on them, recommended a poor old woman with a thousand dollars who desired to enter, and she would have given her money to the new foundation. But my old woman returned crying, telling me that the Sisters did not want to receive her. I was not very satisfied, because the person I recommended was of the advanced age of eighty years. The poor old woman added: 'They do not want to have me because I have a thousand dollars.'" The Bishop then said gravely, "Since that day I have

been certain that the work would be established and would prosper here, because if one builds on holy poverty, Providence cements the building." A short time after, at the request of the Archbishop, the great Irish Dominican orator, Thomas Burke, delivered his first lecture in Saint Louis, for the benefit of the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor in that town. He thus procured them 1,381 dollars, and also honoured the home with a visit, where he was applauded by the old people, of whom several were his fellow-countrymen.

Another circumstance connected with the foundation deserves to be noticed. The steamboat which at that time conveyed travellers between Saint Louis and New Orleans, transporting business men and tourists on the Mississippi, had a charity-box placed on board by the officers for the benefit of the Little Sisters of the Poor; further, the remains of food from the tables and other remnants were carefully put aside for the home of the aged poor. That admirable way of advertising and collecting is characteristic of the locality.

The work at this time had secured its base of operation. The American, with his practical views, marvellously grasped the social side of the matter, and did not spare his assistance. The mother-house was informed of this providential movement, and mobilized its staff to assure realization. On August 24, 1869, the important town of Philadelphia opened its doors to the new hospitaller Sisters. In such an agglomeration the needs were immense, and the resources in prospect considerable; there was a

vast field of charity to work. Pulpit and papers competed in announcing the establishment of the institution for old people. Nevertheless, it began very humbly, under the direction of the good Mother Théodore-Marie, in three houses which they had rented and made into one; but three months later there were sixty-two old people in the home, and the Sisters were occupied in buying ground and forming plans for a considerable establishment. A touching incident happened. Mary Twibill was dying at the age of eighteen. Her father left her the choice of having a fine monument on her grave or of leaving the sum to the poor. "What use will it be to me to have a beautiful monument after my death?" replied the charitable young girl. "I prefer to give the money to the Little Sisters of the Poor." She died on June 13, 1870, and the Little Sisters received a thousand dollars.

One month after Philadelphia, the town of Louisville received the Little Sisters of the Poor, who installed themselves with the old people in an estate lent by the Bishop and originally intended for a seminary. Bishop MacCloskey himself arranged the modest chapel of the home, celebrated there the first Mass, and allowed the Blessed Sacrament to remain there. A community always appreciates highly favours of this kind, because the religious life advances side by side with the hospitaller life in the congregation vowed to charity, and because the love of man cannot reach its perfection, but with an intense love for God. A fragment of a letter gives us details of these early days: "We

made some visits and were received with kindness. We desired to have some poor. On Saturday we received a poor old blind man; the following day we received several old women; then we could say that the foundation was made. The Divine Providence provided according to our needs; within a few days, our house was found furnished with beds, tables, chairs, kitchen utensils, and provisions of all kinds. We were quite overcome with gratitude towards the good God, who disposed so well people's hearts in our favour."

Alas! that foundation demanded a great sacrifice. One Sister fell a victim to the fatigue and privations inherent in the foundation, and died on November 5. She no doubt interceded in heaven for the enterprise so dear to them, which the Little Sisters on earth still carried on in the United States. For minds which consider events from the spiritual and supernatural point of view, these incidents have a real influence. Therefore it will not be without interest to report a fact which happened at the time of their arrival in America. On September 20, 1868, the Little Sisters had admitted their first old man; on the 21st they received another inmate—a paralytic taken from the Protestant hospital, which greatly astonished the Sisters. This poor woman had only seen the priest once or twice a year. For eight years she had not heard Mass. Every day she prayed that it would please God to place her in some house kept by nuns, and without having the least human chance of being heard, she cherished that hope. At the same time she was faithful, in

the midst of Protestants, in reciting her little office of Our Lady, which she had not missed during all that time, and which she accompanied by several long devotions, fastings, penances, and sacrifices, of which one can scarcely understand that a person suffering with gout would dream of.

One year had passed since the Little Sisters of the Poor had arrived in the United States, and already seven establishments attested the vitality of their work, together with its adaptability to American ways. The work attracted the sympathies of all classes and races; at the same time the homes were filling with old people of all nations, without distinction of origin. The year 1870 continued the movement with foundations at Boston, Cleveland, and New York. The enterprise at Boston is worthy of note. From the religious point of view, founded by the Puritans; from the political point of view, having given the signal of independence, the capital of Massachusetts opened without difficulty its doors and streets to the Little Sisters of the Poor, and people saw a Catholic work becoming popular in a centre reputed to be the most refractory, so great is the effect of the social side of institutions upon this industrious people, and so greatly does the idea of liberty in the United States favour courageous attempts and liberal enterprises. The Little Sisters, having the good Mother Cecilia for Superior, succeeded in establishing themselves in Boston on April 19, 1870, in two hired houses, with the keys of the establishments as their only

wealth; but some good ladies brought some dollars to cover the first expenses of installation, and public charity, excited by the clergy and by the press, furnished the establishment. "What I admire," said the Superior of the Jesuits, "is that these Sisters are such as people describe them. One sees that they have confidence not only in Providence, but that they have not a doubt of its protection. One sees that they do not calculate, they do not reckon, they do not ask what people will give them for the needs of their poor. This is what is quite peculiar to them." Previously to the foundation at Brooklyn, the delegate of the Little Sisters of the Poor, having been presented to the scholastics of the Company of Jesus, answered their questions with great pleasure: "Is it true that they are going to beg in the market?" "Is it certain that they eat people's leavings?" "Have people not exaggerated in saying that they have no income, and receive no payment for the old people?" "Then how do they live?" We have thus some echoes of the beginnings of the work in America.

Almost at the same time as at Boston, the Little Sisters opened a home for old people at Cleveland, on the border of Lake Erie. "A good German family having learned that we had arrived," wrote the Superior, "came to ask what we needed. They sent us forty flannel blankets, fifteen foot-covers, three new mattresses for the first poor inmates, linen to make sheets and pillow-cases, with vessels of every kind, and provisions of all sorts." People saw that the Little Sisters shared the condition of

their poor, and accepted for themselves the shame of begging and the inconvenience of poverty. At Cleveland, the Bishop had given for their use a house which would only accommodate twelve poor old women besides the Sisters. This provisional arrangement could not last, and it was necessary to purchase a property, for which purpose a rich Protestant contributed 1,000 dollars and Bishop Rapp 4,000. They were colonizing, and as the colonist, arriving on new soil, is contented with a wooden house and awaits fortune while working, so the emigrants of charity knew how to be contented with little, and set themselves to work the field of benevolence open before them. Thus is success won.

This is what happened at Brooklyn. On May 8, 1870, the blessing of the new house took place, and the preacher exclaimed before a sympathetic crowd: "It is scarcely twenty months since the Little Sisters of the Poor arrived in Brooklyn, with no resource except confidence in Providence, and already a vast building has been raised large enough for a hundred old people." The audience was indeed struck by what had been realized within so short a time: thirty-six men and seventy women were sheltered there. The visitors made their remarks: "How can you thus take care of the aged and infirm poor?" "And why have you such a happy face?" "And how could you leave your fatherland and your relations to spend all your life with the poor?" etc. And they accompanied their reflections with an offering, which came as much from their hearts as from their purse, and

which paid for bread for the poor. About this time the influential people in New York prevailed upon the diocesan authority, and procured a foundation in that great city. This was effected September 29, 1870. Some months later the new home counted a hundred old people, and rivalled the one at Brooklyn.

It remained to form an establishment in the federal capital of the United States. The Rev. Walter, parish priest of Saint Patrick's, Washington, aided by the members of the Conference of Saint Vincent of Paul, made preparations for the establishment which began February 2, 1871, under comfortable conditions far from customary, if one judges from the impressions of the Mother-Assistant: "We could scarcely believe it; the two best rooms were furnished with carpets (those carpets were taken up, and the good parish priest, far from being angry, was edified); in the other was a good fireplace, with the fire already burning. We went up to the first floor. Ten beds were prepared and quite furnished; nothing was lacking. We were quite surprised, and our astonishment was the joy of the good parish priest. He led us to the kitchen; nothing was wanting there—stoves, kitchen utensils, vessels of all kinds; then in the back kitchen we found two barrels of flour, another of salt fish, a supply of sugar, coffee, tea, wood and coal, etc. In a hall was a large table with ten drawers, destined for the Sisters. The table was laid; nothing was wanting. Ladies prepared the dinner, taking it as an honour to serve us with the first meal." There

were also four old and very destitute women whom the Sisters had hurriedly brought to the home.

From time to time a providential blessing visited one or other of the houses. Thus in New Orleans a waggon stopped at the door of the establishment, and the conductor, after having rung, gave the sheet of paper enumerating the merchandise which he brought. The goods forwarded seemed so considerable to the good Mother that she thought it her duty to tell the man that he had mistaken the house. The man began to laugh and to unload the packages, exclaiming with a joyful voice: "If this is not for you, Sister, it is for your house." The astonishment redoubled when a stock of thirty-four flannel blankets, fifteen cotton pieces, seven pieces of printed calico, five pieces of serge, nine pieces of flannel, fifty pairs of stockings, parcels with reels of thread and boxes with buttons, were seen. But whence came all these goods? They learned that they came from the Howard Society. A second envoy followed the first, and enriched the home with thirty hats, sixty-seven pairs of shoes, a store of meat, and a quantity of coal.

To complete the list of foundations, let us mention Albany and Pittsburg. Albany, capital of the State of New York, having an important trade on the Hudson, wished the poor old people of the locality to profit by the benevolent institution which acclimatized itself so well in the United States, and which responded to a general want. For a year the Sisters contented themselves with holding the position with fifteen old women in a small dwelling-

place; but this term having passed, they obtained possession of a convenient establishment in Central Avenue.

Pittsburg in Pennsylvania is the active centre of coal-mines and manufactures, and consequently there is no scarcity either of old workmen and families in necessity. The work there had its marked place and an assured future, for the workmen and the moneyed men appreciate the services which it renders. The home opened on April 25, 1872. The community had the misfortune to start in an unhealthy habitation, where typhoid fever broke out and carried off two Little Sisters; the establishment was then transferred to a more convenient house, and did not cease to prosper. Charity has also its victims; they are not to be pitied, because they go joyfully to their reward, and in heaven they are neither less powerful nor less useful. Is not the focus of charity in heaven? and is it not from above that it shines on to earth?

Vocations had come along with the foundations. The three first postulants had embarked September 4, 1869, to make their novitiate at La Tour Saint-Joseph; others had followed or were preparing to follow. The all-knowing and all-wise Being, who presides over the government of the world after having created it, incites to good works, and incites vocations, to make of them active instruments of His benevolence, and accredited agents of His Providence. The Little Sisters know that they are associated with a Divine work, placed on the earth for the relief of the poor, and that they have a

mission from on high for this ministry of mercy; hence their imperturbable confidence, the serenity of their countenance, their joy in sacrifice, and their mutual efforts in virtue and charity.

Within this period of four years (1868-1872) the hospitaller association had founded thirteen homes for old people, and several more were in preparation in the United States. It had just seen its position strengthened in the State of New York by an Act of the Representatives, who in their legislative assembly at Albany voted a contribution of 10,000 dollars applicable to the establishment at Brooklyn. The Abbé Lelièvre and the Assistant-General, Marie de la Conception, might consider their mission terminated; in the summer of 1872 they returned to Europe, having been the pioneers of the work in America and having added a notable page to its annals.

CHAPTER XX

IN AFRICA (1868) AND IN ITALY (1869)

Maundy Thursday in Algiers—A union of adventurers—Collection among the Arabs—In the East—Eight foundations in France—A few statistics—Entrance into Italy.

At the same time that the society took its flight towards America, the hospitaller charity of the Little Sisters of the Poor directed it also towards Africa. Mgr. Lavigerie, when he became Archbishop of Algiers, wished to show Catholic charity in action to the Mahommedans, and to provide for the needs of the poor of his diocese; with that object he established the Little Sisters in an Arabian house, at Bouzzareah, on the heights which overlook the road and the town of Algiers. It was in October, 1868. The wife of Marshal MacMahon was the first visitor of the Little Sisters; she gave them a list of addresses where they could present themselves, and assured them of the special protection of her husband, the Governor of Algeria.

An episode which is one of the *fioretti* of the Little Family marks its first step on African soil. At Algiers, at the opening of the work, they met with no success in begging for fish. The fish-sellers spoke Arabian, Spanish, Italian, and the Sisters who collected did not succeed in explaining their manner of buying fish. They prayed to Saint Joseph to come to their aid, and, behold! from that day there

was a young man with an angelic face who went before the Sisters making known what they came for. He begged, and little lots were set aside for the Sisters. He watched what the dealers gave, and if he noticed that some let the Sisters pass without an offering, he would himself go and take some small fishes and place them in the basin, saying: "It is for the poor old people; you will be very glad for the good Sisters to receive you later on; you must give them something now." He spoke all the different languages, and was understood by all. On whatever day, or at whatever hour the Little Sisters came to beg, the young man, of whom neither the name nor profession was known, was there. This lasted for nearly two months: "It is the messenger of Saint Joseph," said the Little Sisters.

The Trappists have built an agricultural establishment at Staouéli, which is a model of its kind, and a blessing to the country. The Little Sisters went to visit it, and their cart was filled immediately. There were wine, vegetables, turnips, cabbages, beans, potatoes, etc. They often after that took the road to Staouéli, and the cart never returned empty. Is not the wealth of the monasteries the patrimony of the poor? No offering was more touching than the one which arrived with the following words: "My good Little Sisters of the Poor, I enclose a note for 530 francs for your work. When you receive this I shall be before God. You will pray for me; a poor sinner." Thus wrote a soldier who died in hospital.

Mgr. Lavigerie took advantage of Maundy Thursday to put the new work in evidence, and to interest his people in it. He wished the old men who represented the twelve apostles to be taken from the home; so he invited all the old people not only to assist at the ceremony of the washing of the feet at the cathedral, but also to dine at the Archbishop's house. What a joy for the good old people! Was it not a dream? They were to dine at the Archbishop's, to be served by the Archbishop, by the wife of Marshal MacMahon, and all the greatest ladies of Algiers! They had never seen anything like it in their lives. From early morning they were anxious about their toilet, so as to be properly washed, combed, and brushed. You would have thought they were children surrounding the Sisters, and asking if anything was missing which they ought to have, in order to appear before such company; and the Little Sisters, accommodating themselves to circumstances, tried to satisfy them as far as possible. Four large omnibuses with three or four horses stood before the entrance-door at the appointed hour, to bring all the guests to the cathedral—forty-four men and women with the good Mother and one Sister. What a sight in the square of Algiers to see all that infirm family alight in full dress from the carriage! The square was almost full of people watching all these poor old infirm people passing by, and helping each other to mount the steps of the church. But after the ceremony the place was not large enough, and every balcony and window was fur-

nished with people who wished to enjoy the strange spectacle—the Archbishop and all those old people forming a procession going to the episcopal palace. And there the green garlands hung up in the Moorish galleries, baskets of flowers on the loaded tables, announced to all that a great festival was being held in the palace. The joyful guests were seated. The Vicar-General, the ladies of high rank, hastened around the invited people, who were somewhat dazzled with so many honours. It was obvious that the spirit of faith animated all these people, and that in their poor guests they recognized our Lord. After the meal the Vicar-General said: "Collect all that remains, and take it away." The remains were the part of the festival destined for the sick who remained at the home. The omnibuses came back, and the old people returned to the establishment quite touched, saying that it was the greatest day of their lives. That day passed by, but the work was known, and many doors opened to the begging Sisters.

After a short time the home became prosperous. The old people became interested in their abode, and set to work, as much to distract their minds as to make themselves useful. However, there was more than one adventurer. About 1870 an old man entered who had formerly, at the age of sixteen, crossed the Mediterranean in a fishing-boat. He had been in Africa for sixty years, and had seen the conquest of Algeria; he was cook at the consulate, and was present at the scene where the Bey had boxed the ears of the French Consul, and

so caused the war which brought about the conquest. There was also a Baron, eager for novelties, whom his family did not acknowledge on account of his previous life; there was the cousin of an ex-Governor of the colony, whose whole fortune consisted in brushes and paintings; there was the director of the Algerian bank, who had lost his character; . . . there, too, was Charles, the coachman of the Little Sisters, imbued with philosophical theories and poetry, who made and recited verses and beautiful phrases upon divinity and superstition while driving the cart and looking after the donkey. The majority of the old people had a history less eventful; but the first group of inmates had strange histories to relate. A woman of seventy-seven years old spent two years without putting her foot inside the chapel; at last she took the step, and in religion found again the joys of her childhood. To complete the picture, Mgr. Suchet, the ex-chaplain of the military expeditions, ex-captive of Abd-el-Kader, begged, as a favour, to be admitted to the home, and to be buried in the humble cemetery of the establishment.

The *quête* affords some episodes which have an Oriental colour. During the summer, 1870, the begging Sisters made an excursion into the province of Oran, provided with recommendations and receiving hospitality from the Trinitarian Sisters. In one locality a policeman believed it to be his duty to accompany the Little Sisters, and under his protection they entered fearlessly into all the houses and received some hundred francs. At some dis-

tance an Arabian market was kept; the commissary wished them to go there, and gave them as guardian a native policeman, whilst the Mayor gave them, as assistant, his representative. There they begged under the fierce sun in a vast plain, moving about among three or four thousand Arabs, and making an official collection. The expedition having succeeded, another of the same kind was organized in a village where the neighbouring tribes were collected. The nephew of the commissary, some *caïds* and policemen formed their escort. The appearance of the Sisters in such pomp appeared to make a sensation. Everyone stood on tiptoe, leaned on the shoulders of the first row of people, and mounted on horseback to see the *marabuts*. People offered them honey, "couscous," and mutton. It was an amphitheatre of human heads, with long beards and ardent eyes looking out of burnouses. People spoke of the Sisters and of the old people in their tents and in their huts.

These are souvenirs of the first foundation, which have passed away now that circumstances have changed, and which give in the distance, when ordinary life has taken its course, the effect of a marvellous yet true Eastern story.

Let us return to the mother-country, where eight new establishments demand our attention, and offer as many shelters to a decrepit old age. Tourcoing, Cherbourg, and Valence were founded in 1867, Périgueux and Dunkirk in 1868, Reims, Vic-en-Bigorre and Cannes in 1869. Then we have a

lapse of four years. The movement of foundation changes its position, and gives to the institution of charity a cosmopolitan character. Such works belong to humanity.

Tourcoing had had two kinds of benefactors—the manufacturers who invited the Little Sisters and who subscribed a capital allowing them to obtain a property, and Eugénie—a good servant who kept nothing for herself and gave all to charity. She knew of the arrival of the Little Sisters, and having remarked that there was neither furniture, nor utensils, nor anything else in the house, she had made it her business to procure them. Thus the Sisters found objects of piety, the parlour furnished, some eatables, and the kitchen provided.

At Dunkirk several persons separately entertained the idea of having one of these establishments, and saved for that purpose and gave their offerings to the Dean of Saint John the Baptist, who was rather surprised to receive these sums, and to have about forty thousand francs at his disposal. He sent for the Little Sisters of the Poor, recited a prayer, and gave them the keys of a house, saying, "It is yours!"

The most diverse influences combined for the benefit of these institutions, which really are a work of public assistance and worthy of public patronage. The problem which is renewed every day, and which must be solved, is how to supply the needs, ceaselessly renewed, of the hospitaller family; every day hunger, thirst, linen, clothing, remedies, nourishment—things of every kind are

needed. What father or mother of a family would not think themselves heavily burdened if they had to supply the needs of seven or eight children who one day will be their support? Yet here were humble girls who have no income, and who had to maintain a home large as a hospital for many years, and this attracted people's admiration.

Thus it happened in 1867 that the editor of the Nice newspaper handed a begging Sister fifteen francs which had been confided to him, amiably adding that he would like to give more. "Sir," she said to him, "sometimes we have to go a great way to find that sum. I can assure you that at the end of last month we had not enough to pay the baker." This declaration touched the journalist, who, remembering that a rich Jew had sent to the Mayor a cheque for 500 francs for the committee of benevolence, took advantage of the occasion to repeat the words of the Little Sister in his paper, adding: "At times one regrets he is not a Rothschild." The rich Baron read the article. He wrote to the editor: "In reply to a short article which I read in the Nice paper, I enclose a gift of 500 francs, which I beg you kindly to remit for me to the home for old people, so deservedly patronized by your charitable paper."

In Orleans a curate of the cathedral, who was teaching the catechism to children of the upper classes, wished to inspire them with charity and love for the poor. It was New Year's Day, 1868. He said to the children: "My children, you have all had New Year's gifts. If you would bring them

to me you would do me a great pleasure." The little girls brought their beloved toys. "We will make a lottery of them," said the Abbé Baunard,* "for the benefit of the old people of the Little Sisters of the Poor. You shall offer them a meal, and we will serve it." The idea was acceptable to all these little people, and was executed. On the day fixed the house was filled with merry voices and cheerful laughter. The little girls, happy "to be Little Sisters," went into the rooms and infirmaries, and overwhelmed the old people, who thoroughly enjoyed the treat, with care and kindness. The grouping together of the two ages formed a graceful picture—youth, lively and active; old age, slow and hoary-headed; the gaiety, the candour of childhood, and the gravity, the infirmities of age. When the feast was over three little children advanced and offered to one of the Little Sisters 150 francs in three cheques of 50 francs.

At this period the Revolution invaded the pontifical State. Monsieur de Tournon, who had fought at Castelfidardo for the rights of the Holy See, did not hesitate before the new aggression. He rejoined the pontifical army. His wife, worthy of him, promised to the Master of life and of death that, if her chivalrous husband returned, she would have a chapel built for the Little Sisters of the Poor at Villefranche-sur-Saône, their native place. Monsieur de Tournon fought at Mentana. He returned

* Since Mgr. Baunard, Rector of the Catholic Faculty of Lille.

from the conflict safe and sound. The promise was religiously kept, and the blessing of the first stone took place on June 23, 1869. These worthy benefactors raised the elegant edifice and furnished it. They conformed as regards design and ornament to the custom of the congregation, and thus gave the Sisters great pleasure.

The true benefactress of the house at Périgueux was Mme. de Gosselin; but, whilst waiting for the construction of the buildings, the Little Sisters began in the usual poverty. Some particulars deserve to be mentioned. The Superior of the hospice gave a donkey for the home, which she took care of until the Little Sisters were able to keep it. The Mother-Superior of the Visitation authorized her nuns to dispose in favour of the new hospitaller Sisters of whatever they could spare, each in her department, and there were two loads for their little cart. The Ursulines gave what they could twice a week. The Sisters of Saint Martha lent the sacred vessels and gave some chairs. The Sisters of Mercy sent the linen for the altar and a cope. The missionaries granted the altar. The professors at the clerical school came to say Mass three times a week. The great seminary gave some leavings. All this was very edifying!

One fact shows, in a striking manner, to what extent the Little Sisters of the Poor are the daughters of Providence. A landowner in Dijon bequeathed nearly two millions to the Little Sisters in 1868, on condition that they established one of

their homes in his castle, and supported it by means of the income which he assured them. What was the result? "People congratulated us, and we sighed. You will no longer have to beg, people told us, and, indeed, we were obliged to give up begging for money. Our benefactors were divided in their opinions. 'Accept it,' said some; 'it is for the poor.' 'If you accept it,' said those who knew the work better, 'you are lost. You will no longer be the Little Sisters of the Poor.' The mother-house being called upon to speak, totally renounced this large legacy, and wrote: 'Let us remain poor, trusting in God's good providence, without taking thought for the morrow.' The Little Sisters of Dijon were assembled for the evening recreation when this answer, so worthy and so generous, of the general council of the congregation arrived. Their joy was excessive on hearing this letter read. With one impulse they threw themselves on their knees to thank God. They remained, then, the Little Sisters of the Poor! At that moment they seemed to enter upon their heritage. They went the next day to the Bishop's house. 'What an evangelical spirit!' cried the Vicar-General. 'Keep that document in your records; it is a title of religious nobility.'"

Temporal motives combined with spiritual to prove the wisdom of this measure, for in time of revolutions and of social, political, or religious crises, when intolerant and sectarian parties come into office, they are not tempted to claim the unendowed and unproductive establishments of the Little Sisters of

the Poor. To confiscate them would throw upon themselves the burden of hundreds and thousands of old people bereft of everything, or to throw them upon the streets to beggary and misery. To dismiss the Little Sisters and to secularize the hospitaller service of the home involves exhausting the resources and thrusting out a devoted and unpaid staff—in a word, to close the establishment. But this extreme measure does not in the least settle the question. The life of an old man constitutes 365 days of assistance required per year; the life of a hundred old men constitutes 36,500 days of such assistance; the presence of three hundred old men in a home exceeds a total of 100,000 days of assistance for one single year. Such a result costs the public administration nothing; it is only asked for tolerance to allow the work to act through its proper channels. Who would destroy these hearths of charity? Why, the history itself of the Little Sisters of the Poor is the evident proof of the co-operation and of the benevolence which they meet with in every nation and in every climate.

The year after its establishment in America and Africa, the hospitaller work crossed the Alps and established itself at Aosta, in Italy, on November 13, 1869. The Rev. Father Laurent, Provincial of the Capuchins, was the promotor of the movement and the principal benefactor of the home. He was able to procure ground and a house for the Little Sisters of the Poor. The establishment was a benefit to the district, but, confined in a valley of the

Alps, it could not contribute efficaciously to make known the new form of charity in Italy, and remained a mere stepping-stone. However, King Victor Emmanuel, in a visit which he made to the town of Aosta in 1873, appreciated the services rendered to the poor of the locality, and gave, through the Syndic, 600 lire to the home of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

CHAPTER XXI

DURING THE WAR AND THE INSURRECTION

The invasion—Small ambulances—The Siege of Strasbourg—The civil war in Paris and Madrid—A revolutionary junta (*i.e.*, Spanish Council)—The victories of charity.

THE work of the Little Sisters of the Poor was about to be tested that it might show its strength of resistance in the difficult times of invasion and civil war. In 1870 war broke out between France and Germany. Religion and humanity raised their voices on behalf of the wounded and sick of either army. It was decided in the councils of the congregation that an ambulance of a few beds should be established in all their houses in the invaded territories. Thus, instead of asking with anxiety how they could support their old people among such ruins, the Little Sisters of the Poor only thought about their hospitaller engagements and of taking up new burdens. One cannot help admiring such modest heroism.

Several thousands of unfortunate soldiers were thus succoured. In one single house 230 were cared for; in another about 163 fever-stricken and wounded men were received, of whom 140 recovered and 23 died. They sent several convoys to their houses in the south, in order to remove the wounded prisoners from the spectacle of war, and to benefit the sick with a milder climate. This extra-

ordinary mission of the Little Sisters lasted about six months. The public was interested in these small ambulances, and the committees gave assistance. It was a time of sacrifice, but nowhere did they lack what was absolutely necessary, and they had no complaint to make of either army. Two incidents, one from each side, will give an idea of the kind treatment of the Sisters. At Orleans the house counted 160 old persons and 52 wounded, but for two months the municipal authority supplied the leavings of the slaughter-house, so that the home was never short of meat. At Reims the commander of the Prussian army gave them a safe conduct allowing the Sisters to go about the town with their collecting-van. On one occasion the officers in charge of the provisions put in a whole sheep. It is not against old people, nor the sick, nor the Sisters who take care of them, that people make war. That would be contrary to the rights of mankind, recognized by all civilized nations. One day, when the begging Sisters of Reims returned from the collection with their small burden, a numerous body of German cavalry on the march intercepted the way. They had to wait until these sombre figures with their loaded guns had passed by. A soldier remarked the embarrassment of the Little Sisters. With a gesture of command he called to the nearest troopers to stop. They immediately did so, and, in turn, stopped those who followed them. Then the compassionate soldier standing at the head of the horses kindly assured the Sisters that they could pass without fear. War-

like passion ceased in the presence of charity, and enmity gave place to pity.

The Siege of Strasbourg forms a sorrowful episode of this period. In the month of August, 1870, the bombardment of the place began. What could the Sisters do, with 150 old people, 80 sick soldiers, and almost without provisions, amid the horrors of a siege and the peril of fire, but abandon themselves to the care of their heavenly Father? On August 22 they were occupied with their old people, putting their linen into large pits dug in the earth in order to protect it from fire, when a shell fell and burst; the splinters passed in the midst of the Little Sisters and old people without hurting anyone, and pierced the wall. Everyone said: "Those who are guarded by God are well guarded!" They took the precautions suggested by prudence, and the healthy persons were installed in caves, the others in the safest parts of the building. The ambulance increased; almost every day some wounded were brought in. From the 22nd to the 24th it was terrible; they seemed to be in the pangs of death. Four shells fell in the establishment, killed one of the soldiers, and broke a window and a beam. In this imminent danger all the old people approached the Sacraments to assure themselves of being in a state of grace. Everyone in the house prayed with a pure soul. During the night of August 28 a canister-shell burst in the evacuated quarter of the Little Sisters, pierced the wall, and scattered sixty-six balls, which they afterwards gathered up from every corner of the apartment.

On September 8 a projectile pierced half the wall, and broke several windows of a hall where fifty old people were assembled, but no one was injured. They felt at the same time the greatness of the danger and the efficacy of heavenly protection. Sisters, old people, soldiers (with one exception), all came out alive from this terrible siege; but human endurance has limits: six Sisters were ill, and forty-six inmates succumbed during the six months which followed.

The work of the Little Sisters of the Poor being work for the aged, there is no need to expatiate longer on this period, but rather to draw from it a lesson for the future capable of encouraging us in the practice of abandonment to Providence. How could an institution without income, without fixed resources, have passed through such a time, kept up the homes, without either becoming bankrupt or overwhelmed with debts? Yet this is what actually happened, to the astonishment of the public. It may even be said that misfortunes added to its prosperity. Different people, after this sorrowful test, wished to do good works, and contributed either to diminish the debts with which the foundations were burdened, or to obtain the enlargement of houses so useful to the unfortunate. Quantities of furniture and provisions, linen and medicaments, for which there was no further use after the closing of the ambulances, went to the Little Sisters and made good their exhausted resources.

The homes at Paris underwent a still more painful trial. The cosmopolitan and revolutionary ele-

ments assembled in the great city audaciously concerted together in 1871, when the war was finished, and succeeded in rendering themselves masters of the capital. It was a fratricidal struggle between the regular army encamped at Versailles and the insurgents. On one side, the Generals of the National Guard in Paris had been killed, the town hall taken, the cannon was roaring; on the other side, religious persecution was raging with savage hatred, and to be a priest or religious was to be imprisoned or shot down. What was to become of the five houses of the Little Sisters of the Poor?

The Little Sisters, counting on their well-known poverty and on the indigence of their old people, remained quiet and confident. On the evening of Maundy Thursday at the house in the Rue Picpus they were taking their Lenten supper, when two musket-shots and a whistle were heard. It was the first signal. The door was struck with the butt-end of a gun, and a shout was heard: "In the name of the law, open the door, or we break it in." The Little Sister portress opened, and received this salute: "Good-day, citizen!" The two commanders entered, followed by 100 armed men, and asked for the Superior. The Sisters assembled, some round the invaders, others round the old people. "The cash-box," asked the commander—"where is the cash-box? Let two men stand at every door and shoot those women if they come out." They were led then to the room of the good Mother, where the desk consisted of a simple table with a drawer. "Where is the cash-box?" The Sisters showed them the table, and as the commander

expressed his astonishment, they added: "We have no other; if you do not believe us, we will open all the doors for you, and you can look for yourself." The search was made, but nowhere did they find any strong-boxes. They returned to the room and opened the famous drawer. The commander read some letters which he found there; then took a roll, which he examined and threw back, saying: "These are only silver coins!" The search continued, and the men went into the women's quarter, one of whom, shaking the hand of the commander, said to him: "Oh, sir, I pray you, do us no harm." Another cried: "If you do harm to our Little Sisters, what will become of us?" The same scene was enacted in the infirmary. The sight of so much misery and so many old people, the poverty of the place, acted upon these men and softened them. At last the commander said: "Come, old mothers, fear nothing; we shall do no harm either to you or to your Sisters." During this time, the men who were on duty at the door said to the Little Sisters and to the old people: "Do not be afraid; they will do you no harm." And one added: "Ah, yes! Is it likely anything would be found in the house of the Sisters of the Poor? Is it the same in the men's quarters?" "Yes." "Then we will not go." The Sisters offered them refreshments; they drank and went away, with a few encouraging words as to the future. Once more evangelical poverty and the assistance of the old people had been the safeguard of the Little Sisters. It was the same in the five houses.

Matters did not stop here; the moral victory had to be complete. The old people were not long in discovering that some of their relations were engaged in the party of insurrection, either by force or voluntarily; and on Sunday, the usual day for the visits of relations, a number of insurgents were seen to enter the houses of the Sisters in order to visit their old friends. The situation of the Little Sisters was embarrassing, for, though suspected as nuns, they were spared as hospitaller nurses. Necessity compelled them to go out in their ordinary costume, to make themselves known, and to obtain the customary alms at a time when the churches were closed, when every religious habit, except theirs, had disappeared from the public thoroughfares, when the streets were filled with "confederates" with sinister faces, with armed women wearing the red belt. As for the Sisters, they passed and moved about freely; sometimes they were even saluted. Even more: the Government of the Commune having installed its field hospitals in the Palais de l'Industrie, every day the Little Sisters, from their house in the Avenue Breteuil, went with their dishes, which the citizens filled with pieces and even with fresh meat, saying: "It is for the poor." As if that was not enough, the houses of the Little Sisters had their religious service secured to them. Two priests attached to the work, with the title of auxiliaries, remained in Paris during the siege and the Commune. The Abbé Valin exercised his holy ministry in the house of the Avenue Breteuil, and a little in the neighbouring houses. Abbé Martin, who was

less known, disguised as a coachman or a gardener, proceeded from the house in the Rue Philippe-de-Gérard to the house in Rue Picpus, thanks to this disguise and his big beard. "And in the times of the Catacombs," wrote one of the Little Sisters, "in the morning we assisted at the holy sacrifice in secret, received the Holy Eucharist, and then, thus fortified, we returned to our work." In this way they procured for the dying inmates the rites of religion. At the end of the month of May, 1871, order was re-established.

The work had passed through an analogous period in Spain. It is good to watch it develop in the midst of the storm. In Madrid the house was flourishing when in 1868 the revolution broke out, and for a time triumphed. By way of drawing the protection of heaven upon the home, the Little Sisters formed the idea of receiving a very old and very destitute man. Their choice fell on one called Santiago, who was eighty-nine years old, and who lodged in one of the worst quarters of the town. As his great age and his feeble state rendered him incapable of going to the establishment, two Little Sisters went in a little cart to fetch him. The sight of nuns in that quarter caused a sensation. The people assembled, but when they saw the two hospitaller Sisters go down to the house, supporting old Santiago in a maternal manner —whom they had clad in clean clothes, and who appeared radiant with happiness—the people gave them an ovation, and wished them long life to do

much good for the poor. The nonagenarian was happy in the home, and declared that he had come out of hell to enter heaven, as he used to say in his figurative language. Unfortunately, his complete decrepitude did not allow him to survive long. Then the Little Sisters who had brought him from his poor dwelling conducted him to the cemetery, accompanied by a cortège of old men. That, too, attracted attention, and ended in procuring the sympathy of the crowd for the Little Sisters of the Poor, and this was their best safeguard in that unquiet time. Nor were they ever insulted in the capital, though they were the only religious to be seen in the streets. They even met insurgents, some of whom gave them their alms for their old people.

In the provinces the most characteristic episode was that at Reus. On April 20, 1868, the Little Sisters began an establishment in that town in a good-sized house, with a large garden and yard, which was placed at their disposal by the conservative municipality. Some months later the municipal authority was overthrown, and, a revolutionary council succeeding it, attacked at the same time both its political antagonists and the monastic institutions. What was to become of the recently-established home for the aged poor? People did not fail to warn the Little Sisters of the popular effervescence, letting them know that they were not against their work, but that, on the contrary, they held it in great esteem. They learned, indeed, that the revolutionists, after having driven out the

cloistered religious from their convents, had surrounded the establishment of the Little Sisters of the Poor, forbidding anyone to touch it. "These belong to us," said the men of the people. "We love them, and we acknowledge the good they do to the poor." The work of the Little Sisters for the poor was the means of securing to them and their pensioners comparative safety, and also the Sisters rose higher than ever in the estimation of the public. They continued, then, to go out and make appeals to public charity. The tradeswomen and the women of the market, demonstrative and noisy, manifested their joy on seeing the begging Sisters appear, and cried with emotion: "Do not fear; you belong to us, and no one shall do you any harm." A regiment, through which they had to pass with a load of wood, which they were carrying themselves, opened their ranks, and the soldiers said to one another: "Let us allow them to pass and give them place, poor little things!"

The almost silent apostolate of the Little Sisters has its radiancy like those stars which shine silently on a calm night. It attaches itself to the great principle of human brotherhood, and speaks to the most generous instincts of the human heart in every part of the world. It belongs to the category of those unpretending forces, so weak and yet so strong, which touch the inner feelings of the race and alleviate human misery.

CHAPTER XXII

IN ENGLAND, IRELAND, AND SCOTLAND

Charity in "joint-stock company"—The purse of the begging Sisters—The small benefactors—The great English port—In Wales and Ireland.

In the British Empire, the period from 1868 to 1874 was employed in the development of the existing houses, without any fresh branches being made, but the Little Sisters daily gained ground in the public esteem. The zeal of friends on the Continent was quickened, because they said: "Every step of the English people towards the Catholic religion is an advance for all other peoples of the same race."

The correspondence maintained with the directors of the "savings-box," which centralized the offerings of friends on the Continent, has incidentally given us a lively picture of the collection in London about 1869. "My speciality for the time," wrote Sister Emmanuel, "is to beg of Protestants from door to door, in all the streets, shops, factories, offices, etc. We rarely go upstairs. It is a small collection which has several advantages: it is expeditious; we do not hold long conversations; we announce the object of our visit, and receive a prompt reply; and with a 'Thank you,' we hurry away to the neighbouring shops. If we receive a small gift, we thank the good God; if it is a large one, so much the better; if it is nothing at all, it

is also good; and if they speak contemptuously to us, then it is all the better for us, so it always bears fruit in one way or another. Sometimes for three or four hours continuously we do this, and really the little purse becomes very heavy in the pocket. We have counted sometimes three and four pounds in silver coins—sixpences, shillings, and half-crowns—at the end of what we called a good day, from ten o'clock in the morning until six in the evening. We see coins of every sort and every colour, but gold is certainly rare, and bank-notes yet more so. No, the good God wills us to be true beggars in a very small way; that we should have nothing grand, but that we should pick up the crumbs, the small coins, one by one, making our collection every day. I think that the good God is pleased to see us gather all these crumbs, and that is why He gives us our little collection so often in this manner."

Thereupon the treasurer of "the savings-box" wrote to his principal associate: "Long live our Little Sisters in England! They are the model of their kind. From the moment they become rich they will no longer be Little Sisters; begging is their fortune; they thus practise humility themselves, and induce the rich to exercise charity."

A begging Sister thus related one of her expeditions: "It is the dull season in London in the month of November, and we must always be on the road for about ten days, visiting all the places out of London which belong to our diocese; so, taking our travelling-bag with us, a crust in

our pocket, a purse containing money just enough to take us to the nearest town, and a medal of our Lady, we put our trust in the good God, count that He will fill our empty purse, and preserve us from all danger in our begging. We have walked many miles in delightful country places, at least thirty leagues; we have visited castles of great beauty; we have been served with the most beautiful silver and porcelain; we have seen grand apartments all covered with carpets, pictures, mirrors, resplendent with gilding and luxury; and we have left marks of dust from our poor shoes on the carpets of these magnificent salons. We have been received sometimes with kindness and sometimes with coldness, but always as beggars, and the piece of gold has been often given to us at the door. Thence we have gone into small towns entirely Protestant, asking charity from house to house, from shop to shop, where people have given us a sixpence or a sovereign from time to time, and thus we have done our day's work. God has blessed our proceedings, and when our purse was counted yesterday, it was found to contain £35 5s., and our journey by rail was also paid, which amounted to about £1 10s. It is so pleasant to return home, above all when one has been wandering here and there among all kinds of people. I think that the half of our collection was from Protestants, and three-fourths were in small silver coins picked up one by one from different people."

The *quête* varies in form and adapts itself to circumstances. "To-day, Christmas Eve, we are

making preparation for the great festival of to-morrow. On one hand the crib, our altar and sanctuary, have to be decorated, and, above all, our hearts must be prepared as living cribs; so much for the soul. As to the body, there is also much to prepare, because we must have a real Christmas dinner for the whole house, roast beef and plum-pudding. But to tell you the truth, we have begun to beg for our Christmas for the past ten days, bringing in something every day for that great occasion either actually or by promise, and now we have come to the eve, with almost all that is necessary to celebrate the feast. People have rung several times this morning at our door to hand different things to our Sister portress. 'For Christmas,' they said. It is clear that Jesus wills that nothing shall be wanting to our good old people to-morrow, and they will have an excellent dinner." Such is the way the Little Sisters manage under such circumstances.

One of the principal difficulties of the time in England and Scotland was to secure religious service for the establishment. The Little Sisters had the holy sacrifice of the Mass once every week or fortnight in their little chapel—enough to insure the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, but not enough to have the offices of the Church so as to be exempted from attending the parish church. They wrote from Scotland on the feast of Corpus Christi: "It is true we have neither processions nor the Blessed Sacrament exposed, not even for

Benediction, but we always possess our Lord in our tabernacle. He is hidden from our eyes, but not from our hearts; we know He is there, and that He is there for us, to listen to us and hear us according to His good pleasure." The clergy, few in number, overladen with work and reponsibilities as always happens in missionary countries, esteemed themselves happy in seeing the poor old people in the hands of the Little Sisters, and, reassured as to their fate, gave themselves to the lost sheep of their flock. These necessities can be easily understood; but the Sisters suffered from them, and efforts were made to ameliorate their spiritual condition. One priest, the Rev. Jacquin, devoted himself in London to this humble ministry, with the title of "auxiliary," for about ten years, travelling from one house to another in order to celebrate the holy mysteries, to preach the word of God, and to administer the Sacraments. Some fellow-priests helping him, they gave retreats to the Sisters in the different establishments of the country, in order to sustain them in their holy vocation. The mission of these auxiliary priests had for object to help the Sisters through periods of organization and transition.

But there were other helpers. About 1871, the house situated in Portobello Road, in London, had need of a doctor for the 200 inmates. Now, it happened that at Christmas, and on another feast, a butcher's boy presented himself for several years following, leaving fifty pounds of meat and going away without saying a word. The repetition of

this charitable act roused the curiosity of the Mother-Superior, who wished to know the donor. The boy, when questioned, with some hesitation, gave the name of Dr. Harper. That was the name of one of the best London doctors, a convert to the Catholic faith, and a man whose charity and modesty were well known. The Little Sisters went to thank him, and the conversation turning quite naturally on the medical needs of the home, the doctor charitably took it under his care, and continued to do so for fourteen years.

That same year Sir Humphrey de Trafford, Mayor of Manchester, patronized the Bazaar or Charity Sale organized by the ladies and gentlemen of the city, in order to pay the debts of the home for old people. The treasurer of the savings-box observed with his usual perspicacity: "It seems that the work of the Little Sisters resembles a joint-stock company; they alone are the responsible managers, but all the public is earnestly asked to take shares in it; everyone receives dividends in proportion to his shares. The Little Sisters owe all their advantages to mendicity—that is the sublime originality of their vocation; it is its trade-mark, and one not easy to counterfeit."

Charity is never more touching than when it manifests itself among the humble ones of the world; even the lower classes are ennobled by it. In Plymouth a shoemaker, while soling and patching boots, observed the newly-arrived Sisters, talking of their work and of the old destitute people

in the neighbourhood, and his heart felt a compassion which gave him no rest. As all great thoughts come from the heart, it occurred to him to help the begging Sisters, whom he saw pass his window with heavy burdens ill-concealed under their large black cloaks; and to realize his scheme he put under contribution his hands, his purse, his clients, and his acquaintances, until he had gathered a sufficient sum to buy a pony and cart. The day he presented them to the home was a happy day for him.

He had a rival at Bolton. This man saw the Little Sisters from Manchester, who were making their rounds, begging from door to door, enter his shop. As becomes a workman of his profession, having but little money in his pocket, he looked at the shoes of the Sisters, which appeared to him in a piteous state. He made a remark to this effect, and a conversation ensuing on this subject, the Little Sisters made known that there was but one single old man in the home who knew how to make shoes, though there were many feet to be shod. The shoemaker offered the Little Sisters to make their shoes for nothing; he then announced his intention of visiting the home, in order to see for himself in what he could be useful. The man of humble rank himself understood without difficulty the good work which the Sisters had undertaken to found for his unfortunate fellow-men, and the sight of so many old people moved him profoundly. He had no rest until he had made a pair of new shoes for every Sister, brought several old pairs

for the house, and had provided the shoemaker's shop for the establishment with different articles; as for himself, during that time he pawned his clothes at the pawnshop to buy leather, but on their side the Sisters and the old people prayed for him. When he had finished his charitable enterprise, "Ah," he said to the good Mother, "God blesses me now. He supplies my needs. I no longer lack customers. I can assure you that, in all my life, I have never done so well in my business."

There is not a single house of the Little Sisters which has not at its beginning some history of this kind, under one form or other. In Newcastle two Little Sisters appeared for the first time in the market-place, and were making the round of the stalls, when one of the tradesmen invited them to his shop situated at the corner of the road. They entered as they returned, and the little tradesman, pointing to his goods, told them to make their choice and carry away with them whatever they found to their liking, on condition that they prayed for him. The shop was full of household articles. They took brushes, brooms, mats, pails, small tubs, and returned well contented, not without inviting the good shopkeeper to come and visit the home and the old people. He went. Whilst looking at the poor people, who appeared happy to have obtained such a home and such care, he noted in his pocket-book what was wanting in the household. The good man passed his week in manufacturing and collecting the objects which were

required, so that at the next visit of the Little Sisters he astonished them by supplying them with all the household needed. Afterwards the two begging Sisters called at the shop every week, and received some object or gift in money. This lasted several years, at the end of which the retail tradesman had become a wholesale merchant, and had a large shop with several branches in the town. His opinion was that alms-giving had brought him fortune, and it is a certain fact that fortune began to smile upon him from the day when he stopped the Little Sisters in the market-place; hence he joyfully supplied the Sisters with articles of wood, osier, rush, or tin for the use of the aged poor.

The work, as we have said, remained stationary in the United Kingdom for five years, like those vigorous plants which, after planting, have need of time and rest to strike their roots, to develop the stem, and spread abroad their branches; but on December 2, 1874, the Little Sisters of the Poor were established in Liverpool, and on April 9, 1875, in Birkenhead. Many favourable circumstances concurred in making this a suitable place for a foundation, among others the large population of half a million, the varied industries, and the large proportion of Catholics. Birkenhead is separated from Liverpool by the River Mersey, on which the steamboat passes and repasses, while trains pass under in a tunnel; hence the Sisters were now extending their hospices to Wales. As to the foundation in Liverpool, it had as its first old

pensioner and its glory an old woman of 105 years.

In Scotland, the house in Glasgow did honour to its founders, although it could boast of lodging 250 poor. A visitor asked the Mother-Superior in 1873, "How much have you undertaken to pay?" "£5,200, besides the architect and some extras." "How much had you at starting?" "About £400." "No doubt the workmen give you time to pay?" "We pay as the work progresses." "But still, you have paid something?" "£1,700, of which £1,400 went to the mason, £200 to the carpenter, and £100 to the architect." "And after that, is there still anything left in the purse?" "Almost as much as when we started."

Leeds, although in a smaller way, worked on the same lines. Newcastle had its home. The good Mother Raymond, wearied by the poor who asked to enter, had formed the plan of having a house built, in order to reply without delay to such pressing demands; and it happened that the property of Meadow Bank, twice put up for sale, had not found a purchaser, so that the owners had offered this beautiful domain to the charitable institution for £4,000 instead of £7,000.

The house in Bristol, after ten years' existence, resembled a foundation on account of four successive removals. The establishment previously acquired in Park Row had been taken by the town to widen the street; but with the sum given by way of compensation, they secured the nucleus of a property at Clifton in a pleasant, healthy situation between the country and the town. There,

as well as they could, they installed sixty-five old people in a cottage and a former stable; then they waited for Providence. One circumstance, in appearance insignificant, modified the situation, which was rather precarious. A gentleman of the locality had lost a cat—a pedigree cat—and he had made known that a reward of £10 would be given to the person who should return it. In the meantime the old people perceived a beautiful tom-cat in their enclosure, and after a fortunate hunt they got hold of it. The person who offered the £10 reward received the news, and a gentleman with a pleasant smile paid them a visit. The Sisters knew him by sight, and had often wondered who he was. "That is not my cat," said the visitor. Now, this gentleman was a contractor, and he had built almost all the villas in Clifton and Cotham Hill. With a keen glance, he judged that the Sisters would have to build, and half through love for his art, half through benevolence for the work, he made encouraging offers. Alas! the purse was empty; but fortunately he was rich, and he promised to the good Mother Anatolia to give credit and do good work. Necessity finished the negotiation. Large basements, required on account of the nature of the soil, provided room for all the offices, kitchen, refectory, washing-place, and cellar, whilst the chapel was above. Towards 1875 the home took the aspect of a healthy, respectable establishment, and people who only appreciate institutions which succeed began to be effectively interested in it.

The house in Birmingham did not give hopes of

any definite arrangement; therefore they resolved to sell it, to leave the town, and to go into the country, where they could have a yard and garden, a stable, and poultry back-yard. After many difficulties they bought a field at Harborne, and, anticipating on the funds from the sale of the establishment in town, they began to build according to a plan adapted to their requirements, for the comfortable installation of the apartments for the men, women, and Sisters, deferring till later the erection of the outbuildings. One page of the good Mother's letters admits us to the financial state of the community: "During the time of our building it was a continual providence. Not that there were so many striking incidents as often occur in our little family in similar circumstances; but, day by day, something unexpected came to us through some means or other, and often when I went out on business connected with the new house, I was almost overwhelmed at the goodness of God, shown through those who up till then had given nothing, for He often made these journeys successful by inspiring hearts with unexpected generosity. I think the good God was pleased to make those little streams of charity flow, without ever fully satisfying our desires, yet, nevertheless, providing sufficient to relieve our small daily embarrassments. All this time it is remarkable that the collection in kind nearly sufficed for the nourishment of all the house; we hardly ever bought meat, vegetables, fish, eggs, or rice. The bill for bread was rarely over fifteen or twenty shillings. The collection supplied us even with coals.

We obtained permission to make a collection every Sunday at the church doors of the diocese to help us to build our chapel. Only patience and a great confidence in God were needed, and He sent us, little by little, all that was necessary." On Sunday, July 12, 1874, Bishop Ullathorne blessed the establishment, and provided for the religious service with the help of the Passionist Fathers, who live in the neighbourhood. One circumstance related in the papers under the title "Interesting Incident" influenced public opinion. The Prince of Wales, in one of his visits to a nobleman in the country, deigned to give an audience to the begging Sisters, asked them some questions about their home for old people, and gave them £5 with his own hands. This act of the Heir-apparent (later Edward VII., King of England) was a pleasant surprise to the public, and determined their sympathies in favour of the work. To pay the bills, which were behind time, they organized a bazaar, of which Mr. Hardman was the president, and which produced £720. They were able thus to lodge and to support 130 poor old people.

It is time to cross St. George's Channel and to enter Ireland. When the home at Waterford numbered seventy-five old people, it was necessary to think about giving them more air and space, and to quit an expensive hired home. In 1872 they bought some ground conveniently situated, and the Work of the Propagation of the Faith judged it useful to the Catholic cause to apply an

allowance of £200 towards purchasing it. In 1873 they commenced the edifice, with which an incident is connected.

At Waterford at the time of the building the cash-box was found empty. The Little Sisters and the old people began to pray, calling upon Providence for help. One night, a poor woman of the home thought about the good Mother's want of money, and how it could be remedied. "My God," she said in the simplicity of her faith—"my God, I have long prayed to Thee, and I do not know if Thou wilt hear me. But give me some proof that Thou wilt answer me, by placing in my way some charitable person who will give me money for the good Mother; then I shall die in peace, because I am very old." And she recited her rosary fervently. The next day, which was the day when the old people went out, she left very early. Soon she met a good old farmer of eighty-seven years of age, whom she had known when she was young. They talked together. The old farmer confides to his old friend that he has come to the town to do an act of charity before he dies. This was exactly the opportunity she desired. So the good soul began to praise her Little Sisters, saying that one could not find a better-kept house, and that the poor could not be more carefully tended. Convinced by this hearty eloquence, the farmer said: "Where are these Little Sisters of yours?" "Come along." Arrived at the house, the good little woman was quite beside herself. She opened the doors, rang the bell, and refused to speak to anyone. She

must see the good Mother that minute. The good Mother comes. "Quick, go to the parlour! It is a benefactor!" The good man salutes respectfully, explains that he has a little help to offer, and draws out a roll of £20 in notes. Seeing this amount, the good woman thought that the whole house would be paid for. By this incident we recognize the spirit of the hospitaller family.

The house in Waterford was not the only one in Ireland. A second foundation was made in Cork, as Bishop Delany had just given his consent, which Mr. John Murphy, a talented writer, had helped to obtain. The city of Cork, with its 100,000 inhabitants, and its port, which is the nearest to North America, and is frequented by the Irish of the whole world, was a situation much desired by the congregation. The *Cork Examiner*—a paper with a wide circulation in the South—announced the event, and opened the way for the alms-gatherers. The Little Sisters of the Poor opened their home provisionally on December 3, 1875, but the following February they took possession, having taken one of those long leases of 999 years, which are equivalent to freehold, of an extensive property situated at Montenotte, on one of the hills which encloses the picturesque valley of the Lee. The buildings, constructed for ordinary uses, were very insufficient for their new purpose, and necessitated successive enlargements in order that they might shelter at least 200 old people. But a work is like an organism, which seeks its conditions of life until it has found them, and then develops accord-

ing to its nature. The same phenomenon was reproduced in Ireland as in England and in the United States.

Let us again cross over to England. A swarm issued from the two houses in London, and settled on August 14, 1876, in the remote quarter of Stoke Newington, there to build a new hive and to distil the honey of charity. Numbers of workmen and small families inhabited this district. There they found poor old people whom the other houses were unable to assist. They found also resources of the immense Metropolis which had hitherto been neglected. In addition, they had Sisters ready for the work. Consequently, it was determined to open a third house in London under the patronage of St. Anne.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN AMERICA

Seven new foundations (1873-1878)—Testimony of a witness—Clients of the home—Act of the Congress of Washington—Three public demonstrations—The fire at Brooklyn.

LET us cross the Atlantic Ocean and land in the United States. The work of the Sisters of the Poor had made great progress there, and seven new establishments had enlarged their sphere of action: Indianapolis, Troyes, Detroit, founded in 1873; Richmond in 1874; Milwaukee and Chicago in 1876; Newark in 1878.

The Rev. Hatton, who has been for thirty years the devoted friend of the Little Sisters of the Poor in the United States, has sketched the scene of their work. We add a few incidents to his description:

"The emigrant who comes to the United States mostly brings with him only his strength and energy, and the desire to rear his family with the wages gained by his daily work. How few there are who succeed in amassing a fortune! As long as God gives them health they may be able to provide for the want of the day, and keep themselves and their children. When the children are grown up they generally leave the paternal roof to seek their fortune somewhere else. What hope remains to an artisan whom old age or infirmity has rendered

incapable of work? The workhouse, if he is allowed admittance. It is true, there they find shelter and bread to eat; but this official charity is cold and heartless. Prejudices are great against these institutions, especially amongst the Catholic poor. In the midst of the distracting cares of everyday life they may have forgotten the holy and consoling practices which Religion imposes upon her children; but when the evening of life sets in they love to seek again the creed which was formerly the joy of their childhood, and although the remembrance of it may have been effaced for some time, yet it always remains engraved indelibly on their hearts and character. Besides the emigrants who come from Europe, a great number also of Americans, reduced to poverty, come and knock at the door of the Sisters of the Poor. In a new country, where fortunes are so rapidly gained and as rapidly lost, it is not rare to meet people in the greatest destitution who formerly had every comfort and convenience of life. Nothing equals the energy of the American in remaking his fortune, but when he comes to an age when his strength is worn out, or the way to success is barred by younger and more clever forces, what is to be done? What else but to seek a home under the wing of Christian charity? In looking over the list of names of the old men received at the homes of the Little Sisters at Washington, New Orleans, etc., one can see clearly that several are borne by persons who have known better days, but reverses of fortune have constrained them, after many struggles, to

ask a shelter which the world, their friends, or even their children, would not or could not give them."

The Archbishop of Baltimore, having come one day to the house at Washington for a function, the door was opened by an old man with a long white beard, with a military bearing, who asked for his blessing. The old man's face and the sound of his voice awakened in the prelate a distant recollection and startled him, but he put it away as improbable. After the function, Archbishop Bailey inquired who had opened the door to him. The Mother-Superior answered that he was Commodore X——. "I should like to see him," replied the Archbishop. The Admiral of the Southern fleet, during the War of Secession, after having shared the fate and the ruin of the conquered, sought in his old age a shelter with the Sisters of the Poor. He presented himself. Both gentlemen remembered, not without emotion, the days of their youth, when they were children in the same suburb of New York, both then belonging to the same Episcopalian church, going to the same school, and playing the same games. Destiny had reserved for them a different lot, but they met each other as Catholics, and the old man addressed himself with pride to his Bishop, saying: "My lord, I prefer this place, humble as it may be, to the one I occupied when, still in error, I commanded the vessels of the State!"

The abolition of slavery, which was the consequence of the War of Secession, had ruined the planters by changing the conditions of labour, and

had set free a multitude of negroes. One evening, after a day out at Richmond, a man, who had known every luxury of life, came back to the home sadly. He was no longer the rich planter, the indolent creole, whose slightest wish was obeyed by a crowd of slaves. . . . He had met on the road his old coachman and another servant, wan and ragged, incapable of gaining their living. They had knelt before him, saying: "Master, when shall we return to the plantation? . . ." He was overwhelmed with grief at their common misfortune.

"One of the distinctive characteristics of the home of the Little Sisters in the United States is the remarkable mixture of creeds, occupations, and nationalities of the various people who inhabit it. The reflection, as it were, of the population of the country is seen there—a population composed of a great number of emigrants from all countries of the world who came to seek fortune on this new soil. The German and the Frenchman, the Irishman and the Englishman, mingle with the Spaniard and the Italian, with the inhabitant of Canada or with natives of the United States. All live in peace under the kindly, peaceful influence of the Little Sisters. There all languages are spoken, which become blended in the universal tongue which is understood in every country, the language of charity.

"As to religious creeds, everyone follows his own with the greatest liberty. Naturally, the Catholic religion predominates, but the adherents of different sects receive the same welcome, and

are treated in the same manner. The Methodist or the Lutheran is able, if he likes, to read the Bible in peace next to an old Irishman who tells his beads with fervour, without anyone disturbing their various devotions. However, it is fair to add that the devotedness of the Little Sisters, the thousand cares which their inexhaustible charity lavishes on the poor, infirm, afflicted of all sorts, who flock to their home, exercise a great influence on the hearts of our separated brethren, and dispose them to embrace a religion which alone is able to engender so much virtue."

An example will show how this spirit of tolerance was exercised. It happened at Baltimore. They had received an old woman, who had been cast upon the road by her daughter, who had a horror of the workhouse, and who feared the home of the Little Sisters because she was a stern Methodist. Some benefactors induced her to enter, assuring her that at the home no one's opinions were influenced. She was, indeed, so prejudiced that at the home she always kept as far as possible from the Sisters, never went to the chapel, and walked in the yard when they said prayers or had spiritual reading. However, she became reassured when she saw that no one spoke to her about religion, and that she really had her liberty of conscience. Then she began to reflect, to observe, and gradually to assist at the prayers and at the spiritual reading. Four months after her entrance she fell ill, and, believing her end had come, she asked for the good Mother, who was convinced that she would require to see

the Methodist minister. But, to her great surprise, this woman declared her wish to die in the faith of the Little Sisters. On account of her previous dispositions they delayed, but on her reiterated solicitations a priest came, and after preparing her for five months, he received her into the Catholic Church. At the same time there was a Lutheran at the home. She used to tell the Sisters that she was going to die in the religion of her ancestors, and that she was on the watch not to let herself be deluded. Nevertheless, grace changed her disposition. When she saw her old Methodist companion so happy since her conversion, and so patient in spite of her great pains, she wished in her turn to find peace and taste spiritual happiness. She came in contact with a German priest, who prepared her for the Sacraments. . . . We touch here on a superior order of things which merits our special respect—namely, on the obligation of following what conscience points out as the right path.

"The work of the Little Sisters of the Poor has found a generous sympathy in the midst of the population where it is established. The American is liberal in his views, generous and charitable by natural disposition. He helps and encourages those who devote themselves to the good of their fellow-creatures, and if he has not always the courage to imitate them, he knows, at least, how to render them a just tribute of appreciation, which manifests itself by substantial and practical assistance."

In Richmond, for instance, they had opened the home for old people in a house given and furnished by the family of Caldwell. Then, by availing themselves of this gift and the resources of the place, they secured an estate, and had a convenient establishment built there. As this plot of ground was situated in a new part of the town, there was no drain to take off the water, which is essential for so important an institution. The friends of the work used their good offices with the public authorities. The municipality discussed the petition, and stipulated that the connecting drains should be continued as far as the new section. The municipality, won over by a Baptist minister who extolled the spirit of tolerance and true charity of the Little Sisters of the Poor, finally, notwithstanding the divergence of religious belief of its members, voted the motion in favour of the hospitaller Sisters. Consequently, the public saw, for three months, squads of workmen and convicts occupied in executing works about a mile in length, of which the only utility at this time was to improve the hygienic system and salubrity of a Catholic establishment of charity.

An event of great importance for the future of the work of the Little Sisters in the United States occurred in 1874 at Washington. The home for old people began to develop itself, and two circumstances brought the young institution prominently before the public: on the one hand, the Sisters obtained permission to solicit alms in the offices of the Federal Government, a circumstance never

granted before; on the other hand, hundreds of workmen of the city, with forty horses, voluntarily carted away and levelled the earth for the construction. The Little Sisters, finding themselves accepted by the authorities, and urged on by the popular movement, profited by these favourable dispositions to advance the interests of their old people. The good Mother Gonzales, their Superioress, addressed a petition to the Congress of the States, to interest the members in the home. When the motion was introduced, after a favourable opinion, to the Chamber of Representatives of the nation, it was received with applause. The vote is drawn up as a judicial document in the public Acts in these terms: "1874.—*Law*.—To the Little Sisters of the Poor in the town of Washington, 25,000 dollars to discharge the debt on the building and to complete the said building." The Act of Congress re-echoed in the country, and amounted to a Bill of naturalization.

The congregation had now twenty establishments in the United States—that is to say, besides the personal staff, which cannot be improvised, and must be previously subjected to a religious and professional formation, it had to provide for the daily maintenance of thousands of infirm and poor, to secure them healthy and sufficient dormitories, common rooms, and infirmaries, to abandon inconvenient and expensive rented houses, and finally to have its own establishments well adapted to its charitable purpose, without giving up the simple

and sensible methods of the hospitaller family. A co-operative society of some importance, with its resources, credit, and engineers, would have had enough to do in undertaking a similar enterprise, and here we find an association of humble women, guided by the higher ideal of Christian charity and united by the bonds of religion, who undertake the charge with tranquil assurance, and bring this great work to a successful issue. On the other hand, the interest which this work of assisting old age awakens in the Old and New World shows in a graphic manner what charity is diffused in the hearts of men, and how it spreads in waves of kindness, independently of political groups, countries, and diversity of race.

In the home, the Sisters spend their days in the absorbing duties of tending the aged, and in this sweet task of maintaining their poor. Few events detach themselves from the ordinary course of existence, and when they do, if they extol the work, they modify but little the situation of the Sisters, always humble and laborious. History sets its events in relief, and forms brilliant pictures of them, but in the meanwhile the charitable army works in the plain and in the valley, with its look ever turned towards human misery, which ceaselessly solicits it; to welcome old people, to assist and lead them to heaven—this is the one task.

The ceremonies connected with the laying and blessing of the first stone in New Orleans, Baltimore and Troy are worth mentioning on account of the public interest which was manifested. In

New Orleans, a long procession with the old people and the Little Sisters at the head, followed by guilds of men with banners and music, and clergy closing the procession, passed through the streets of the city. In the midst of a crowd in varied costumes, of white people, blacks, and mixed races, the preachers spoke in English, French, and German at different stations on the way. In Baltimore the thirty-eight Catholic societies of the town, including more than 2,000 members in costume, hoisting the pontifical banner and the starry flag of the Union, paraded in the streets, forming a brilliant retinue for the priests, who went to bless the house for the old people and for the Little Sisters. In Troy thirty-two societies, wearing their habits and carrying banners, escorted the clergy in their surplices, preceded by the cross, candles, and incense, whilst bands of music were heard at intervals, and a respectful crowd watched the imposing procession. The Bishops gave the benediction with solemnity, and the preacher was able to say with emphasis: "Be consoled, poor old people; soon you will have here a home. God has sent you sisters, or rather mothers, who will take care of you until your last hour."

Trial accompanies success, and trouble mingles with joy. About four o'clock in the morning of March 7, 1876, the shouts of the passers-by warned the Little Sisters of danger: one of the wings of the house in Brooklyn was on fire—the wing inhabited by the old men. The police were summoned, and the rescue was organized. The strongest among them escaped and got upon the roof, and thence

to the opposite wing; others escaped through the home, as the staircase was in flames. The infirm were all carried out by the Sisters and those who came to help. The fire-engines arrived and the pumps poured out torrents of water. At six o'clock the fire was extinguished. But then came the great scene of sorrow: sixteen poor old men had perished in the flames; another who tried to reach the ladder fell bruised to the ground. A considerable part of the building was burned or injured by the flames and by water. The poor old people—men and women—all trembling, were united in little groups in the yards, because the whole of the locality was cleared for the fire-engines. The grief of the Little Sisters was profound; it was the first time that the Little Family had been struck with such a misfortune. In the midst of this scene of desolation, however, something calm and noble struck the spectators: it was the sight of Christian and religious grief. The Little Sisters wept over the aged dead, while they tried to console and encourage the living, and to procure them shelter.

The old people were all safely housed once more. The evening came and the crowd dispersed, but the work of the day was not yet over for the Little Sisters. All the furniture had been thrown pell-mell into the yards, and the water would spoil what the fire had not destroyed. All that could be saved had to be placed under shelter and put in order. On March 27, a hurricane overthrew the part of the wall which remained on the side of the fire, and the falling-in shook the side-walls of the

chapel. The assurance companies, seeing that the amount of damage exceeded the value insured, generously decided, not only to pay the amount of the assurance, but also the excess. The establishment rose again from its ruins, and some months later recovered its old aspect and its destination. A number of old people who had been obliged to leave returned to the home, and this was a happy day for the Little Sisters. Other old people joined them; very soon there were 205, and once more the house prospered.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE TRIAL OF FIDELITY IN GERMANY AND IN SWITZERLAND

An order for separation—Reasons for unity—The attitude of the Little Sisters in Alsace-Lorraine—Intolerance at Geneva—On the way to exile.

THE three houses in Strasbourg, Metz, and Colmar had changed their nationality, and now formed part of the Empire of Germany. They peacefully continued their work of benevolence, when they were compelled to separate from the mother-house situated in a foreign land, and to constitute themselves a distinct and independent congregation. The theory of national independence had come into collision with a congregation of a universal and cosmopolitan character.

The official announcement of the Government and the reply given by the Little Sisters were identical in the three houses. This is what it contained: "The superior Administration has just transmitted to me a decision of the Governor which concerns your establishment. Through considerations of public policy, the Government refuses any longer to acknowledge the jurisdiction which the mother-house, represented by a Superior-General established abroad, exercises over the affiliated houses in Alsace-Lorraine, and it is required that the house in Strasbourg [or Metz, or Colmar] be set free from the

dependence which it is under at present. Therefore, Madame, in conformity with the orders which I have received, I require your congregation to separate from that in France, and to proceed to a division of the goods which it possesses in joint possession with the mother-house. The Government leaves the three houses in Alsace-Lorraine free to unite themselves under the authority of a common Superior, or to remain independent of one another. Moreover, whatever the decision of the congregation may be, as it will necessitate the introduction of a modification in your statutes, it will be necessary to solicit the approbation of the Government, conformably to the decree of the 31st January, 1853."

Under the appearance of an administrative measure for a district, there was really a vital question for the hospitaller institution. A work has its essential constitution and its moral personality; arbitrarily to modify an organism so complete and so delicate, would it not be to destroy or annihilate it? On the other hand, charity and benevolence rise above frontiers, in the serene and universal region of ideas and virtues, and harmoniously adapt themselves to the institutions peculiar to the various peoples and the most remote nations.

The stated delay of three weeks having elapsed, the Sisters remitted their decision, conceived in the following terms:

"SIR,—In reply to the note which you addressed to us, dated December 30, 1875, and after having

taken the time which you have allowed us to reflect, we have the honour to inform you of the impossibility of our accepting the offer which has been made to us, and of our irrevocable determination not to separate from our mother-house and from our other houses in Europe and America. We can only pray to God that He may enlighten the superior Administration, and that it may be permitted to us to keep our present position for the interest of our poor."

At the same time the Superior-General wrote to the Little Sisters of the Poor, who thus placed the unity of their Order in the first rank of their considerations: "If God permits them to drive us away from our houses in Metz, Strasbourg, and Colmar, let us submit, and let us be strong to bear this trial. Return to us to rest yourselves, in order soon to return to the poor, for you will not be without them." This was the proof of fidelity; it was also a proof of the strength of that cohesion which the institute had acquired; there was not the least wish for separation. The Sisters of the three houses thus set an excellent example to the members of the congregation, and this should be held up as a pattern to the other houses of the Institute.

It was the same throughout the district: the friends of the hospitaller work came to an arrangement, and urged the Government to repeal a measure motived by circumstances and not by public utility. Especially in Strasbourg, there was a unanimous concord in pleading the cause: Catholics, Protes-

tants, and Jews signed petitions which papers of all shades of opinion supported. The Government, better informed, began to show itself more favourable to a purely charitable institution, placed under the safeguard of religion and public opinion. Differences were not long in being reconciled, as had been the case everywhere else—in Belgium, England, and the United States—and the Little Sisters continued their mission of charity by remaining united as they had been. Toleration even gave place to benevolence on the part of the authorities, and Her Majesty the Empress of Germany desired to honour the house in Strasbourg by her visit, good words, and alms.

We must now turn back and give the history of the house in Geneva in Switzerland before arriving at the sorrowful closing of the home. The Marquise de Chaumont took the initiative in the scheme, and the foundation was laid as early as September 29, 1861, in the suburb of Carouge. However, the public charity could not be established in full liberty on account of the sectarian ideas of several people. The home, notwithstanding, developed, and was soon filled with contented and happy poor. People then took offence at the religious habit which the Sisters wore, and at their ranking as a religious corporation. Fortunately, they succeeded in turning aside the difficulty, and in obtaining the direct property of the establishment. Mgr. Mermillod favoured the institution, which grew sometimes in peace and sometimes in trouble, living

upon alms received in the country and from small legacies which charitable people left to them. In this way they maintained, thanks to benevolence, the Catholic reputation for charity not unsuccessfully nor without merit in the town of Calvin. The home had attained its eleventh year of existence when the persecution broke out.

A law was voted which prohibited religious Orders to live in the canton of Geneva. However, the Little Sisters obtained authority to continue their work there for ten years longer, although with galling restrictions. This was in July, 1872. In 1874 the Catholic clergy were driven out of the parish of Carouge, and replaced by schismatics, so that the chapel of the Little Sisters became the refuge of those Catholics who held out for liberty of conscience, and the chapel had the honour of replacing the parochial church. During that period the home for the old people was not troubled, and did not suffer from a material point of view, for gifts and legacies supplied the deficiencies of the public alms and provided for the establishment. In 1875 there was a recrudescence. A law withdrew the authorization accorded in 1872 to the religious corporations, and the Great Council voted a decree of expulsion at the end of August. The Little Sisters of the Poor had but one month's delay before the execution of this decree.

Then an Assistant-General, delegated by the mother-house, went to the common-rooms and infirmaries to warn the poor old people of the measure which struck them, in the person of their

Little Sisters, who were guilty of being nuns. She made known to all, in the name of the congregation, that the Little Sisters would not abandon their dear poor, and that they would convey those who wished it to the neighbouring houses. Out of eighty-five old inmates, fifteen found a shelter with their relations, eight who were past being moved were admitted to the hospital of the canton, sixty-two accepted exile with those who had adopted them. Beyond the frontier places for them had been prepared.

At last the decree of expulsion was posted up. The police surrounded the house, in order that nothing should be carried away, and on August 31 the administrator of the goods of the dissolved communities, assisted by two lawyers, proceeded to make the inventory. These acts wrung the hearts of the Sisters and the old people with grief. The administrator authorized the removal of the personal linen of the Sisters, of their books, statues, and pictures, as well as of one parcel by each old person, and twelve beds with the bedding; the remainder was confiscated. The Blessed Sacrament was taken from the chapel; the sacred vessels and ornaments were confided to the Catholic parish priest, who was himself restricted in the liberty of his ministry. The exodus began on September 3 with a convoy of seventeen old people; and on September 8, 1875, after having placed their cause in the care of the good Mother in heaven and the Archangel Saint Michael, patron of the home, the Little Sisters of the Poor said farewell to the home which had been

theirs for fourteen years. A centre of charity was extinguished.

The grief of the Catholics and liberal-minded in the country was profound, whilst the sectarians applauded. The Little Sisters went away with their poor old people, leaving to the future the care of re-establishing their work in Switzerland, where they had found ardent sympathies and generous vocations, and being well aware that the nation could not be held responsible for the excesses of the Calvinists, in one of the cantons of the republic. Along the road the employees on the railways and the travellers looked with astonishment at these exiles of seventy and eighty years of age making their way under the faithful guidance of the Little Sisters, and they were eager to assist and help them. The old people in the houses at Lyons, Grenoble, Saint-Etienne, etc., crowded together in order to make room for them, and as one or two of the Little Sisters of Geneva resided with every group, they were reminded of the original house, and thus their exile was softened.

CHAPTER XXV

IN SPAIN

Twenty-two new foundations—An imitation—The King and the Court at the home of Madrid—A royal order—Incidents—The inundation in Murcia.

AFTER a suspension of four years the movement of the foundations in Spain began again at Huesca and Salamanca in 1872, at Mataro in 1874, and at Xeres in 1875; then a great movement began from 1877 at Palma (Balearic Islands), Zamora, Tarragona, Cadiz, San Lucar de Barrameda; in 1878 in Pampeluna, Murcia, Seville, Medina-Sidonia, Vitoria, Ecija, Saint Sebastian, Gerona, Baëza; and in 1879 in Plasencia, Bilbao, Tortosa, and Caceres.

It is of the nature of things which succeed that they should be imitated, and also that the imitators should appropriate the true work to themselves. We find ourselves for the third time in the presence of this difficulty. An account published at Huesca in 1873, after having said with truth that "the Spanish nation need not envy any other so far as benevolent establishments were concerned," made known, however, to the public that "it claimed the foundation of an institute for old people." The account added, inverting the order of things: "That which exists in France under the title of 'Little Sisters of the Poor' is very like that which is to be established in Spain"; and to increase

this resemblance, it attributes to the new institution a past, a history, a name, a book—and what not? They took up precisely those of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Naturally, it was confusing to the public mind to see the parallel development of two institutions claiming the same title, although under different costumes. This state of things lasted for about ten years, and ended in an understanding.

But what was the attitude of the public authorities with regard to the charitable association? On October 16, 1871, the Little Sisters of the Poor had been convoked by the "Alcalde" or Mayor of Madrid, and introduced into a hall where about twenty gentlemen were seated. The Mayor made the agreeable declaration that their home inherited, with the authorization of the Government, 15,000 pesetas, out of the fortune of a Marquis, deceased even before their arrival in Madrid. This circumstance excited curiosity, and the Little Sisters seeking information, the person who had been the instrument of Providence said to them: "I did not know you at all, but when I am taking my constitutional in the morning, I have followed your Sisters several times in the streets, and I have seen them ask the charity of a little meat or vegetables. I was touched by this. Finding myself the executor of the will of the said Marquis, I said to myself, 'Who wants money more than these poor things?' So I proposed to the minister to grant you 10 per cent. of the Marquis's fortune." In the month of January Queen Vitoria* visited the home unexpectedly.

* Wife of King Amédée I.

She caught the Little Sisters in the full activity of their devoted service: the Sister of the laundry in her wooden shoes was washing the clothes; the Sister in the kitchen was bustling about among her cans and sacks of bread, the product of the begging rounds; the Sister in the infirmary, taking care of the sick and infirm. They all united in leading Her Majesty to admire the goodness of Providence, which, without committees or incomes, provides for the necessities of the poor. The Little Sister shows what she is when seen at her work in the midst of the old people. The Queen's visit gave her this pleasure.

These two incidents connected with the house in Madrid were but the preludes to the official patronage of the Spanish Government. This protection came from the highest in the realm, and is unique in the annals of the congregation. On Sunday, April 18, 1875, the Feast of the Patronage of Saint Joseph, the foundation-stone of the establishment situated at Calle Almagro was laid. King Alfonso XII, the Princess of Asturias, the ladies of the Court, the Prime Minister, Canovas del Castillo, Cardinal Moreno, the military authorities, the Governor of the province, the first "Alcalde" of the capital, etc., enhanced the ceremony by their presence. Numerous spectators of every degree of the social ladder, including market-women, were crowded together on the road; the papal and national flags floated from the flag-staffs, and triumphal arches marked out the road for the procession. The Court, having made its entrance in state at

ten o'clock, the clergy advanced, and the Cardinal proceeded to the liturgical benediction. An official Act was then drawn up, signed by the dignitaries of the Church and the State, and then the stone was sealed; the King touched the machinery, and thus solemnly laid the stone in presence of a brilliant assembly. After Cardinal Moreno had explained the spiritual meaning of the ceremony, in an eloquent discourse, Alfonso XII pronounced this royal speech: "The stone which I lay to-day is destined to be used as the foundation of an edifice consecrated as an hospice of benevolence. I hereby declare that those who serve the poor, serve me."

This event had an important effect in the governmental sphere of the nation. A document inserted in the *Official Bulletin* (province of Guipuzcoa), dated November 8, 1878, completed it. The foundation in Saint Sebastian had just taken place, and the Mother-Superior had made application to obtain the authorization to beg for alms. Her solicitation was referred to the Government, which replied: "His Majesty, considering that it is only by such means that an object so benevolent and so worthy of praise can be realized, has judged well to grant the authorization solicited, ordering at the same time that the present Royal Order be published in the *Official Bulletin* of this province, so that the said Superior and her Sisters meet with no obstacle in the exercise of their mission." This official document was followed by another even more comprehensive, which was published in the *Gazette* on December 9, 1880, and which concerned Madrid,

the capital: "Royal Order of the 1st of the said month and year. Referring to the request introduced, the section commences by observing that the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor is a benevolent institution which has for its object to receive in its homes destitute old people, and that it is approved of and authorized, thanks to the protection of the Government, which allows it to be established in every part of the kingdom. The Government, in virtue of its power, has authorized it at Saint Sebastian, and desires it to benefit by the special disposition which is in question (*i.e.*, the permission to beg). In granting this authorization they could not do less than accord the permission to the Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor to solicit public charity in favour of their old people, as their homes only exist upon the succour which they receive for their subsistence from their benefactors." This double decree does great honour to the charitable institution, whose position was legally regulated, and treated as a public service.

Side by side with a general study of the society a little digression finds its place, and gives a local colour. Thus, the foundation in Cadiz was marked by the celebration of a solemn Mass at the church of the Carmelites, with the co-operation of the musical society of Saint Cecilia and of a famous preacher, in presence of the civil and ecclesiastical Governors, the Mayor, and the whole of the municipality. The twelve old people of the home attracted

attention, because it was the work for the old people and the Little Sisters, the instruments of that work, that attracted this assembly and its praises.

The house in Salamanca, after many years of poverty, had its day of glory. With the help of friends, they succeeded in buying the "palace with the four towers," an ancient historical monument in ruins. The removal of the home was made with great solemnity. The old people and Little Sisters with the cross walked at the head, the chaplain in his cope, and the guests bearing candles followed. The procession proceeded through the streets; flags were hung on the balconies along the way, and the churches saluted the procession with joyful peals of bells. The parish priest of the new parish and the Bishop of the diocese joined in the procession to bless the establishment. The whole population rose to salute and honour its poor with one of those outbursts of faith which chivalrous and Catholic Spain still manifests from time to time.

A doctor of Mataro, having bequeathed his goods to the poor of the town, his executors thought they could not fulfil his intentions better than by giving them to the hospitaller congregation. The legacy was employed in purchasing a piece of ground and in building the home; but though a house provides shelter, it does not give food. So the Mayor had the wisdom, at the time of the official ceremony, to make known to the people under his administration that the establishment was not endowed, and that they would have to associate in the charitable

enterprise by contributing to the collections of the Little Sisters. But collecting alms from house to house is difficult to carry out successfully when a home has had such a brilliant opening. The begging Sisters knew this by experience, and the brilliant gift which builds their house sometimes only renders their duties more difficult and painful.

Twenty days after the foundation at Zamora, on Saturday, April 30, 1877, at four o'clock in the evening, a brilliant ceremony took place in the parish church. It began with the rosary and the chanting of litanies; a procession followed, consisting of sixty cavalry officers, the civil authorities, and the Bishop and his clergy. People threw flowers from the windows on the way, and the popular enthusiasm was great. The ceremony finished up by the blessing of the chapel of the home and a visit to the twenty-six old people. One of them, who had reached the advanced age of ninety-two years, sat at a small table and received the offerings. Animated and joyful by all he saw, the nonagenarian exclaimed: "This is paradise! We are happier than kings!" And when the Bishop passed by, the old man added: "We are happier than his lordship, because we have no cares. We have but three things to do: pray, eat, and sleep."

In Manresa, at a time of political trouble, when the home found it was becoming very hard to live, they had received a poor old man who was dying of hunger and misery. This singular old man would not allow anyone to touch his chest, and slept with an old waistcoat on. The mystery lasted

until the day when a severe illness obliged them to remove the clothing for reasons of health and cleanliness. They then discovered that the waistcoat was lined with gold, and contained a sum of 1,500 pesetas. They asked this rich pauper if he knew what he possessed, and what he intended doing with it. The ragged proprietor replied that for a long time past, whenever he gained a piece of gold, he had sewn it in his clothing; that in reality he was ignorant of the value of his treasure; but what he knew was, that he had gathered his money in this way in order to leave it, as a reward, to the good people who should assist him in his last days. This sum thus came to the Little Sisters, and the treasure-trove was used in a moment of penury to pay for bread and other unpaid bills.

The Little Sisters in Spain were still passing through the period of organization, and, as it happens in similar cases, they experienced indigence more than once, whilst waiting for final success. Thus the house in Jaen had to be contented with goats for a supply of milk for six years. They were without a tank for water, and sometimes without water even for the washing. At the end of this time a cow and her calf were given to the home. At this good news the old people went into the yard and warmly greeted the animals; even the blind had the consolation of touching them, and of thinking how the milk would be an improvement to their fare. As to the washing, the market-gardeners of the neighbourhood lent their

donkeys, and with the help of the old people capable of exertion, they transported stones and sand. By working themselves they gradually improved the situation, and obtained a tank for the storage of water.

Whilst the hospitaller work was already prospering in the great centres, and several establishments found benefactors—especially at Malaga, in the Larios family, at Xeres in the De Domecq family—it was necessary, in the less populous centres, to be contented with living and assisting a limited number of old people, whilst waiting the help of Providence to do more. The Little Sisters tasted poverty, but consolations of another kind supported and gladdened them, because where sacrifice is, there is the unction of grace. In the small houses, more than elsewhere, the family method of living is maintained, and that is not without its pleasure, because holy poverty keeps souls close to God, and gives the joys of virtue. It has often happened that the Little Sisters, when transferred from a poor house to an establishment with more comfort, have regretted leaving the small house where they had more self-sacrifice and consequently more pure happiness. Evangelical works must not be looked at simply from the human point of view, if we wish to understand them aright.

Thus the Little Sisters in Jaen were consoled by the edifying death of a good old man of ninety-one years of age, who had been at the home since its foundation; he was full of gratitude, and had made it his happiness to lead the blind and render

many small services of this kind as long as he had been able to walk. After having borne his infirmity with patience which never failed, he made a supreme effort to assist at the sacrifice of the Mass on Palm Sunday, saying: "This is perhaps for the last time." And so it was, for on Maundy Thursday he grew weaker, and received the last Sacraments. On Good Friday, at three o'clock in the afternoon, he said these words: "My God, into Thy hands I commend my soul," and he expired without agony, leaving a pious and sweet memory to all those who witnessed his death.

Another successful foundation was that in Palma de Majorca in the Balearic Islands. A legacy of 1,500 pesetas, entrusted to an Oratorian Father, and the encouraging reception of the inhabitants—such were the beginnings. But the following year they made an important acquisition, and to pay for it they organized a subscription. Now there was a Majorcan whom lucky business transactions had made a millionaire, and who loved his country. The philanthropist, Mr. Coll, hearing of the enterprise of the Little Sisters of the Poor through his business manager, sent him 15,000 douros to pay the purchase debt, and, not liking to do things by halves, they were to let him know if anything else was wanted. The manager, overcome with joy, ran to his friend the chaplain, a very devoted friend of the work, the Rev. Cayetano Puerto, who officiated at the cathedral, and communicated the news to him the following morning after Mass. The interview was touching. The Little Sisters, learn-

ing what Providence was doing for the success of their home, cried out: "What will happen if after this we are not virtuous? but indeed we will try to be so." Their cry of gratitude was interpreted by a promise of virtuous devotedness, which above all helps the house to progress. The unfortunate benefited by it, and the benefactors congratulated one another, saying: "Fifteen months ago the foundation was laid, and already there are 115 old people!"

Let us now relate the different stages in one of these foundations in Granada. "I have seen all the accounts," wrote a person well informed, "and this is what our friends have told me. Until the day of acquisition, commencing from that of the foundation, they experienced dire poverty, without intermission or consolation: sometimes they had twenty reales in the cash-box, perhaps once or twice a capital of 1,000 pesetas, which was used at once to purchase linen, and there was always extreme difficulty in gathering at the end of each month the 500 reales for the rent. Nevertheless, the acquisition of a garden was decided upon; it cost, with the accessories, 26,000 pesetas, but after, as before, the cash-box was empty. At the end of a year, after they had acquired the ground—that is, on Ascension Day, 1875—they laid the first stone. The Archbishop performed the ceremony. He blessed the trenches which were to receive the foundations of the new chapel. All the benefactors present confessed that they went away asking themselves if, within ten years' time, the house

of which the first stone had then been laid would be finished. All the money the good Mother had, had been spent in building a wall that was indispensable at the side of the road, and in digging the trenches which had just been blessed. Little by little all was paid, as no one would give credit. The total expense, including all that was done for God, for His own house, for that of the poor, and then for the poultry-yard and the outhouses, amounted to 120,000 pesetas. The Archbishop contributed 10,000 pesetas from his own purse, the mother-house a little more; the rest came in by small gifts. Continually, during the work, people thought that they would have to stop." A merchant directed and watched the works with great care; one family paid the total expense of the bread eaten at the home; the Dean of the medical faculty gratuitously gave his services as doctor to the establishment, and a learned professor of the same University, with his brother-in-law, contributed the greater part of the chapel. Thus the union of friends established centres of charity, which afterwards support themselves, and shed their rays throughout a whole region.

October 15, 1879, was a day of mourning and anguish in the town and country of Murcia. A flood covered all the country. At this time the home, a new foundation, was situated just outside the suburbs. About two o'clock in the morning, the Little Sisters and old people were awakened by the alarming sound of the church bells and the

cries of neighbours who were knocking at the door, asking shelter. They said their houses were inundated, but that this house, being stone, from its more elevated situation, had served for shelter in similar circumstances. There was a crowd of men, women, and children, half clothed. The women had imitated the Wise Virgins: each arrived with a little lamp burning. The Sisters opened the doors. Old people and refugees were put into the first story. It was time, for the water came into the yard in torrents and overran the floor to the height of the beds, but it did not reach the bedding. The sky became dark; nothing was seen but water, nothing was heard but the rushing of the water and the sound of the alarm-bells. The scene resembled a shipwreck. In this disaster they prayed, they recited the rosary. The poor refugees were overcome and trembling because they did not know what would be the end of the scourge. They cried to Heaven for mercy, as they saw their poor houses, beaten down by the torrents, falling in ruins, and all that they possessed buried under the rubbish or becoming the sport of the violence of the flood. "God gave it to us, and He has taken: His will be done!"—such was the cry of resignation of all these people. After many long hours the water began to subside, but for fifteen days the poor people were obliged to remain at the home, at least for a shelter at night. The Little Sisters, remembering their title of Hospitaller Sisters, gave lodging, food, and clothing to these newcomers.

CHAPTER XXVI

HISTORY OF THE OLD PEOPLE

The work of grace—Struggle between conscience and human respect—The weight of misfortune—The passing helpers of the Little Sisters—On the borders of death.

ONE element would be wanting to this history if the old people did not occupy a good place in it. Just as diamonds are extracted from the midst of common minerals, and are cut to make them brilliant, and are then placed in jewel-boxes, so from the common mass of facts edifying accounts are extracted, and marvellous histories, every one of which has its rays, sad or pleasant, brilliant or veiled, and the collection contains the peculiar character of the hospitaller work.

In Pau, 1875, Jean Clausel was taken with a second attack of paralysis, and received the last Sacraments. Under this existence, so humble and so ignorant, was hidden a marvel of grace. Life gently returned, and presently he had enough strength to give an account of his state, as the tears welled from his eyes. The Sister infirmarian asked him the cause of his grief, and tried to relieve it. "Oh," said the old man, sighing, "I am grieved to see that I cannot accomplish my vow—the vow that I have made to God to die on an armful of straw." Then his face lit up, and he related his story: "Twenty-five years before

my entrance into this house I was a schoolmaster. I gained my living in peace, in spite of the sacrifices which I imposed upon myself for the education of my two brothers, one of whom died at the time he was finishing his studies. One day I read the life of a Princess who, several years before her death, left all to beg her bread, and died on straw. I felt at once that this was a call from God, and I experienced an impulse which I could not resist to leave my village and go to beg my bread. I have done that for twenty-five years, and during all that time I had but the sky for shelter—a barn or a stable to pass the night. When the law prohibiting mendicity was carried out, I was obliged to cease begging my bread, about seven years ago. Then I resigned myself to enter this home, where I understood that I should continue to eat the bread of alms, and that I could devote myself to the sick. Now," he added, "I hope to die a good death. May the good God grant it to me! I long to go to see Him, although I am a great sinner. I am very weary of the earth." He reached his eightieth year, and towards the last he walked with the help of two sticks. This good old man, in spite of his infirmities, made the way of the Cross every day on his knees, recited the seven penitential psalms, and passed whole hours in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament; besides, he was the server at Mass, and edified the household by his manner and piety. However, they did not remark anything extraordinary or singular in this old man, except his unlimited devotedness to the sick, principally

at night, and the regularity and tranquillity of his life. God prolonged his exile for two months, and he died, purified through sufferings and sanctified through religion.

In the South, during the exercise of a retreat, a poor woman, who was imbecile rather than mad, all of a sudden declared her wish to go to confession. There was great astonishment. The Sister in the infirmary warned the missionary about the mental state of this poor woman. But, behold! intelligence reappeared like a lamp which is relighted, and the confused ideas became distinct. She wept for the faults, conscious or unconscious, of a life passed without God; she confessed them to the minister of Jesus Christ. Then she went to the infirmary, knelt down before her companion, and begged pardon for the troubles she had caused them. Deeply affected, the invalids touchingly replied. The poor creature, quite happy, received Holy Communion—the first in her life—tasted for some days the happiness of knowing and loving God, then fell back again into imbecility like a lamp which burns, flickers, and goes out. But a soul purified by penance, enriched with the gifts of God, touched with divine love, dwelt in this poor human body upon which insanity preyed.

In the South, one of the poor women, stricken with a painful illness, grew very tired of her life, and thought of destroying herself. One day, driven by despair, she took advantage of a moment when the Sisters were very busy to realize her terrible scheme. Fortunately she was perceived by the

good Mother, who was exceedingly surprised on seeing this poor woman, who until then could hardly walk, run away. She hastened to stop her and ask her what she intended doing. The person, seeing herself discovered—or, rather, the evil spirit which possessed her perceiving itself discovered—caused her to fly into a furious temper, so that four Sisters could scarcely hold her. Not knowing what to do to appease her, for words and encouragements were without effect, they thought of fetching holy water, which they threw on her until she was quite wet. The poor woman began to smile at once, and said: "It is finished. I don't know what you have thrown on me, but when that water fell on me, I felt myself so pacified that I do not know what passed in me." She began to cry, and asked pardon; she confessed her purpose of committing suicide, repented of it, and blessed Heaven for having saved her.

In some cases the moral idea is more in evidence than the religious idea; whilst in others it is the spiritualized soul which raises itself toward heaven; in others, again, it is a crisis of conscience which is produced, and it is merely the dignity of human nature which is in question. These examples offer all the variety of a little world in action.

One man, in his youth, had made an attempt as a minister in some religious denomination, and had since abandoned all idea of proselytism to make money and to enjoy life. He was now eighty-six years old, and had been for seven years in the home. Of the various phases of his existence he

had kept but a love of comfort and a taste for novels, as if reading enabled him to escape from the sad realities of his position. However, his infirmities increased with age, and his impotent limbs refused more and more to render him service, whilst in his soul nature and grace made internal war. A prey to increasing irritation, this miserable man tried greatly the patience of the Sister infirmarian. At last one day, when she had reached the limit of her endurance, she went to the Superior, begging her to say something to the sick man, as authority would add weight to it. The good Mother went to the infirmary, saluted the old man, who was sitting on an armchair in a corner, and asked him how he was getting on, but he refused to answer. She asked him a second time, a third time, with the same result. She sat down and said, "For the love of God, tell me what makes you so sad, and what can I do for you to make you happy? I have never refused you anything?" He replied: "No." "Very well; tell me what I can do for you." "Nothing; it is too late. I have searched for happiness everywhere, and I have not found it; now I am old, infirm, impotent, unbearable to everyone. My future is still more sad; I see hell open to receive me." That soul disclosed itself at last, and presented a spectacle of desolation; but in presence of this misery the religious spoke plainly. She spoke of the divine mercy; she said it was not too late, that Jesus Christ wished for his salvation. Gradually confidence animated the soul of the unfortunate old man, who, making an effort, begged that the

Catholic Bishop might be asked to come to him. This happened in a mission country. The Bishop came. "Ah, my Lord!" said the old man of eighty-six years, "I have resisted so long."

In another country, they welcomed an old woman without knowing whence she came, but who was, as it were, stranded at the seaport after a shipwreck. The wanderer, like many others who fall into poverty and want, had taken to drink. To get her to enter the home meant to rescue her from her vice and from the occasion of indulging it. Kindness gained her over. The poor woman felt her moral feelings reviving, and, recovering consciousness, she turned instinctively towards God, for religion is an incomparable moral force, and has remedies for all miseries. After some time she said to the Sisters: "I love your religion very much; nowhere have I found such great charity." This conviction becoming more and more deeply rooted in her mind and heart she desired to be received into the Church, and after having undergone the preparatory time of instruction, fidelity, and good conduct, at the age of seventy years she received baptism from the hands of the Bishop. When she bowed her head, as the holy water flowed over her forehead, the Little Sisters looked on this new child of God, and the sight enraptured their hearts and strengthened their faith.

Circumstances vary with the condition of persons, but the causes of misery remain unchanged. An old man, full of sad thoughts, was walking along

the banks of the Rhone. His business had failed, his wife and children were dead, and the only one who remained appeared to be ill like the others. His paternal heart was suffering, and to help his child he was willing to work and earn for them both; but he could find work nowhere, as he was so old and weak, and discouragement had seized him. He was going to a solitary place in order to put an end to his life, and was walking along the bank of the river when he saw, before him, the establishment of the Little Sisters of the Poor. The thought came to him at once: "If I ask to enter there!" For some time he walked up and down, now attracted by the water, now to the home, the idea of destruction and the instinct of preservation waging within him a violent combat, but the inner voice spoke imperiously: "Enter here!" He entered, made known his misery with bitter tears. They gave him hope, and he succeeded so well in moving the pity of the Little Sisters that five days after he was admitted. This completely changed the man. He became gentle, resigned, amiable, reconciled to God and to humanity, and thought no more of committing suicide.

Mrs. X—— had succeeded in life. Her husband, who was a Government official, had become Sub-Prefect in an important town. Through her education, her natural talents, and her virtue, she had acquired a certain influence in her own sphere and was esteemed in the town. The storm was preparing which was about to overthrow this state

of things. Her husband gave himself up to gambling, suffered great losses, and soon after died. Her son, who remained her sole hope, lost his reason, and was put into an asylum. In a few weeks she had lost her fortune, her position, and means of living. Bent under misfortune, she arrived at the threshold of old age; but ennobled by Christian courage as by her misfortunes, she knocked at the door of the Little Sisters of the Poor, in the very town which had witnessed her glory. She entered and submitted to the common rule. The benefactress had become one of the poor old people of the home.

Let us return for a time to the lower ranks of life to see how the devotedness of the poor manifests itself, and how they themselves become the devoted auxiliaries of the Little Sisters as long as their strength permits them to work. Constance was an old woman who had entered the house at Ghent when it was founded, and had watched the development of the home for fifteen years. She loved to render service, never missed a day's ironing, doing with scrupulous attention all that was asked of her; also the Sisters, who had been there from the foundation, bore witness that Constance was invariably amiable, as on the day of her arrival —pleasant to everyone, respectful, never meddling with other people's business except to give useful or seasonable advice. One day, while engaged at her favourite occupation of ironing, she fell with the iron in her hand. The Sisters carried her away

to the infirmary, and as she was eighty-nine years old, the good Mother told her to remain there and end her days in peace. Constance replied: "My good Mother, as you give me nothing more to do, I am going to pray all the while for the needs of the house, because since I came here you are always receiving more people."

In the North of England one old man worked with incredible eagerness to clear some ground destined for a garden, and in the evening by moonlight he was again there at work. One might have thought it was the old man's family property. The good man fell so seriously ill at the age of eighty-five years that they administered the Sacraments to him. But he could not resign himself to die before he had finished his task; so, taking Saint Joseph for his advocate, he prayed to him with urgency to obtain him a delay of two years of life—the time necessary to get the garden into good condition. Dear little "Father Pin," as they nicknamed him, got better, contrary to all expectation; he continued for two years to clear the ground. At the end of this time, illness again seized him. This time his task was accomplished; he no longer asked for a delay, but died peacefully, contented to have rendered service to the Little Sisters.

Another inmate, Claude, had motives for entering the home. Formerly a farmer, he had eaten and drunk all he possessed, and finally took a place as domestic with some of his nephews; but his passion for drink had driven him thence. Rejected by everybody, he asked to be placed with the

Little Sisters of the Poor, promising never to drink any more if he were received. Claude was exemplary at once. Seeing him so well disposed and still strong, they thought of sending him on errands to the town and harbour, but not without some anxiety on account of his old passion. But Claude was radically cured, and not once had they even to reproach him.

Another of their old men, named Andrew, was dying. He said to the good Mother: "I have a favour to ask you: I should like very much to see all the men in the common-room to ask their pardon, for we old folk have disputes from time to time between ourselves, and one can easily give pain to another." They assembled, and poor old Andrew gathered all his strength, and, sitting on his bed, said: "You are all here, are you not? Then I ask your pardon, and, for my part, I forgive you with my whole heart." He held out his hand to everyone, and each said a kind word to him. The scene impressed all the old people, and they went away, saying: "That is a beautiful example to follow." The Sisters proposed it also for the imitation of their old pensioners, for when a number of people live together, there must be difficulties at times.

Among the old people in Spain there was one whose head touched his knees, and whose body was a perfect image of decrepitude, whilst the soul kept its vigour. He had for companion a blind man, and, the one leading the other, they arrived early in the morning in the chapel, and remained there

in prayer until breakfast. The nonagenarian received Holy Communion every time the Little Sisters received it. It was difficult for the priest to give him Holy Communion, since the man could not raise his head. What use was this poor old man in the world? He had his work to do here below; he prayed, he set a good example, he suffered like a Christian, he had faith in a better world. Was he not one of those who attract the blessing of Heaven on the establishment?

In the world of old people, on the confines of existence, human destiny manifests itself no less than in middle age and in youth, under the most varied forms, and history, the sensitive mirror, fixes in the landscape the images which present themselves—images often common, sometimes curious, sometimes rare.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE WAYS AND CUSTOMS

The foundations at Ghent and Charleroi in Belgium—The casino at Rochefort—The fair of Saint Lazarus at Autun —A home in Paris in 1874—Drawing up of the Directory.

BELGIUM was enriched with two new establishments —at Ghent, 1873, and at Charleroi in 1874; and France with eight establishments—at Grasse, Rochefort, Nantes (second house), Lons le Saulnier in 1873, Calais, Autun in 1874, Limoges and St Denis in 1875.

Arriving at Ghent, the Little Sisters were received by their benefactors in a house all decorated, and they had the joy to perceive in the midst of them a group of three old men and three old women, who formed the bouquet of the feast and the core of the home. One good family gave 50,000 francs to put an end to the provisional state of the foundation. Then Mr. Werspeyen made known the charitable institution to the readers of the *Bien Public*. The home at Charleroi, on its side, excited sympathy in the manufacturing region of Hainaut, and found an important support in the Dumont family. Belgium loved these homes for the aged.

The foundation at Rochefort was begun in by no means an ordinary way. Mgr. Thomas, who was a fervent friend of the institution, thought of purchasing the casino, which was offered at a low

price, and of installing there the Little Sisters of the Poor. They arrived on July 28. They entered the establishment which for thirty years had been the meeting-place of all worldly pleasures. They saw the large dancing-hall which occupied the whole length of the building, the theatre, violins, tambourines, and on the walls paintings portraying dancers and allegories, laughter and joy. They went up to the galleries, which ran round the building, and where the spectators used to sit. Everywhere desolation, disorder, and dilapidation reigned.

The Sisters thought of their mission, and, impressed with the great contrast between the past, of which the scattered remains lingered before their eyes, and the future reserved to that building, they placed a stool in the midst of the hall, put their crucifix upon it, and knelt down and prayed. The young girls of a convent school came unexpectedly, bringing some offerings, and were quite delighted to be the first benefactors. They formed into groups in the centre of the concert-hall, tried its acoustic properties, and caused it to resound with a pretty hymn in honour of the Blessed Virgin. The old people entered, and the change of scene was complete.

At Autun, the charitable ladies had kept the house destined to serve as a home open every day for an hour. Hence the Little Sisters, on arriving, found the apartments full of objects—old beds, old stoves, old carpets, old clothing and utensils, chairs and lamps, vegetables and provisions—a pleasant sight for the Sisters.

On the following Sunday Mgr. Perrault was the interpreter of public feeling, and he spoke from the pulpit of his cathedral: "The first help must be continued if we wish the work to prosper. We are going to open a subscription, and I, your Bishop, put myself at the head of it." During the following days it was curious to see the Archbishop's horses, carriage and coachman in the streets, carting wood, straw, provision, old furniture, just as public charity gave. It was no less curious to see at the great fair of Saint-Lazarus, the Little Sisters going, before all the people, at the invitation of the hawkers, to receive from each one some small article, such as knives, scissors, thread, needles, ribbon, soap-balls, and to see the comedians and the clowns, carried away by this example, come out of their encampment, bringing pennies and other small coins. Such manifestations are only seen at the starting of a foundation, when it is in all its freshness and simplicity.

Let us return to the general history. An article which appeared in 1874 in *Le Temps*, which represented Liberal ideas in Paris, attracted much attention. "I wished to judge the progress of the institution myself," wrote the editor, "and I went to visit the house in the Rue Notre Dame des Champs. The doors are wide open to visitors. This amiable and inexhaustible charity has nothing to conceal, and the most earnest praise is received with touching simplicity. The Little Sisters of the Poor have remained faithful to the generous tradition of Jeanne Jugan. They only think of their poor.

They wear themselves out for them, and count themselves as nothing. It is difficult to imagine a hospice better kept and more wisely administered. On entering, the visitor is struck by the intelligent management of the different departments. Cleanliness is the luxury of this model establishment.

"The linen-room is itself a marvel. Large chests of drawers reaching to the ceiling held the linen of the poor. Every old person has his own division, where his napkins, sheets, his underclothing are folded up with a care which the most accomplished housekeeper would not be ashamed of. In this room the Sisters keep both the linen of the house and that which the old people bring with them at their entrance into the hospice. These poor people like to keep their own things. They stick to their tatters; therefore all clothing is marked with the name of the owner. And there is no risk that these objects will be mislaid or lost in the washing. Watched with maternal care, the garments of the poor reach an age almost marvellous.

"The very large kitchen has a most joyful aspect. You should see the large boilers where every day the coffee is boiled or the soup made. You ought particularly to see the large piece of furniture with drawers which contain crusts or pieces of bread picked up everywhere. Every crumb of bread is the object of an attentive examination. These provisions of bread are enormous and (with all due deference to the dainty) very appetizing. Judge of the quantity which is necessary for the needs of each meal.

"I was greatly struck with the expression of

calmness, contentedness, and serenity written upon those faces, which bear for the greater part the impression of long and cruel sufferings. These poor people have found there their paradise. They are of all classes; they have been picked up everywhere. Under the empire of this gentle law, they have all, little by little, become gentle and peaceable.

"Now remember that the Little Sisters of the Poor live on daily charity, and that it is prohibited to hoard up; that at the end of the month they know not what they will have the following month. And when you see them accomplishing their indefatigable work of devotion, do not turn aside, but go to them. Be well assured that there is no charity better placed; be well assured also that there can be no philosophical opinions of any kind —I do not say hostile, but even indifferent to this admirable association. Charity thus understood, thus practised, must be respected and encouraged universally, because it is so profoundly human."

These appreciations of the press lead the mind to the inner study of the congregation, to its psychology. At this epoch certain forms of charity, accepted or tolerated in the beginning, were falling into disuse or were refused. Thus, at Nice, as in several other towns, there was a charity ball with the double object of offering amusement to society and of benefiting the poor from the pleasure of the rich. A part of the receipts had been remitted to the home for the aged. But since then, the congregation absolutely avoided seeking support from

public amusements; this worldly charity is not that of the Little Sisters, and they experienced many times that Providence amply made up for it.

In the same way, in several departments the municipality or board of beneficence, wishing to acknowledge services rendered to the cause of public aid, voted an annual subsidy for the Little Sisters. This public assistance was natural in the beginning, but later on it became apparent that this method of assistance was not sufficiently conformable to the essence of the work. The latter, instructed by experience, became more and more conscientious, and freed itself from accessories in order to concentrate its force of action. In Marseilles, for example, in 1875 the Municipal Council, well-intentioned, voted an annuity of 5,000 francs. A note makes it known that "the Congregation has resolved not to have any fixed incomes, and as these kinds of gifts may be regarded as an income upon which we could count, whereas we are required to abandon ourselves entirely to Divine Providence, to count upon nothing, to look gratuitously after the poor, and every day to take the trouble to go and seek our bread. Consequently our Superiors have decided that we must thank the Mayor, and beg him not to place us on the Budget." The Mayor was greatly touched with this decision, and said to the Superior: "Sister, I can tell you that it is the first time in my life that I have seen money refused. Everybody comes here to ask me for some, and you, who have so many poor to feed, you come to thank me and beg me to give you none. I salute

you with profound respect. God cannot do otherwise than bless you."

In Brussels, from the foundation of the home, there existed a society of ladies who received a certain number of subscriptions in the name of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and had a cash-box for that purpose. Under some form or other, in several houses during the early times, especially at Dijon, a committee of ladies had worked for the benefit of the home for the aged. It is but just to acknowledge highly the services rendered by the devotedness of these persons, especially in what concerns the linen department, clothing and mending room; but this charity had made double work in most cases, and had somewhat changed the true idea of the work. At the time with which we are occupied this use was no longer suited to the ways and customs of the congregation. Also, in Brussels in May, 1875, Madame d'Aripe, the president, remitted all the accounts to the Little Sisters. Thus, the force of circumstance itself and the action of time were sufficient to bring about the desired transformation.

The *quête* was also made with greater regularity. In the beginning, and for twenty years at least, it was not rare for one Sister to go out alone or accompanied by one of the inmates to execute commissions and to receive the usual offerings; now they went out two by two. On the other hand, necessity had compelled long journeys for collecting in the country and absence for several days from the community. Progressively they had drawn up

rules to meet these cases of absence in such a way as to procure the constant benefit of the common life to the Little Sisters who went begging, whilst assuring to the homes the resources of the locality. Moreover, the laying down of railways and fresh means of intercommunication facilitated the making of this regulation.

History being the memory of the past and the lesson of the future, it is important to weave into the thread of the story all the practices which fix tradition and form customs. At Bruges, as before in several other houses, the custom existed of making the strong and healthy old people work at some occupation other than that connected with the home itself. In this place the men wound thread into skeins, and the women made lace: this was a practice of the early times of the hospitaller family, and in this case part of the benefit returned to the house and a part to the old people. Even after the approbation of the congregation in 1854, the rule specified that one Sister should take charge of the work of the poor in every house. She had to be "just in her treatment of them, giving everyone exactly a part of the price of his work," and that part was regulated by the Mother Superior-General according to the localities. The regulation stated that the said Sister "will have a register in which she will note the different works, the day when they were given out, the name of the persons who procured them, the quality, the price which it be proper to give." In Bruges in 1868 and the following years the practice was still flourishing. They promised

the women a part of the price of their work in lace-making; then this regulation was modified, and they gave to everyone liberty to work on her own account before breakfast and after supper; but somehow or other the total profit from the work-women scarcely ever exceeded 200 francs for a whole year. This inconvenience also resulted from it—that the oldest could not work at the hours left free, that the infirm suffered by contrast, that the winter season impeded the whole staff, and that in effect a class of privileged and a class of disinherited old people were created. The congregation, which had to a high degree the practical genius of organization, took care not to introduce this primitive practice into the foundations of more recent dates, and traces of it would be vainly sought for either in England or the United States. Without doing harm to anyone, the congregation allowed it to fall into disuse where it existed, and it disappeared of itself from the houses of the Little Sisters, like those branches which dry upon the tree and soon no longer form part of it.

Thus, as the little family was developing into a great congregation and the Directory was being drawn up, an important evolution in practices and customs was effected.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE MOTHER-HOUSE. APPROBATION OF THE RULE

Chief residence of the Order—Pope Leo XIII—Testimonial letters—The vow of hospitality—Examination and approbation of constitutions—Death of the first Little Sister of the Poor and foundress.

THE Superiors of the houses of the congregation, meeting at La Tour Saint-Joseph to the number of 371 on July 1, 1878, to take part in a general chapter, found the establishment there completed, and a staff of 450 postulants, novices, and professed. A gift of 100,000 francs, made by one of the Sisters in 1876, had permitted the completion of the works, and the Rev. Derlet, an architect of merit, accomplished the last part with success. At last, after twenty years of exertion, the monument stood erect in the beauty of its architectural lines, with its buildings in stone and in granite (extracted from the property itself), at the same time simple and imposing. At last the calmness of the country life and the quiet regularity of religious exercises succeeded to the noise of tools and to the coming and going of labourers and mechanics.

Brittany was still the centre of the hospitaller family, the country of its birth. Situated at the extremity of Europe, as if to lend itself to the connection between the Old and the New World;

peopled by the Celtic race, like the countries of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland; in continual communication with Paris and London, and from thence with the entire world; devoted, like France, to mission-work, and to the propagation of the faith, this province offered the conveniences desirable for the chief residence of the hospitaller congregation.

The mother-house of the Little Sisters of the Poor is situated between Rennes and Dinan, in the open country. Some heights rise above it between Bécherel and Saint-Pern. A line of buildings, from which extend four wings attaining a length of 235 metres, appear in a valley in a pleasant country formed of meadows and trees, in the midst of which stands the tower of Saint Joseph (La Tour Saint-Joseph) under a sky in which generally a few clouds are floating.

The central and only novitiate of the congregation was joined to the mother-house, and was not wanting in picturesqueness from the variety of nationalities which were represented there. The Latin nations, France, Spain, Italy, sent their subjects; the English-speaking nations, Ireland, Scotland, England, United States, furnished a considerable number of recruits; Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, etc., manifested bountiful vocations. The time of the novitiate, with its two years of probation, permitted the blending together of these elements in the mould of the hospitaller charity, and the use of them afterwards for the general good of the aged poor throughout the world.

People had indeed seen the Little Sisters of the

Poor leaving this place like young swarms of bees —for the different foundations in France and in Belgium from 1856, for England in 1861, for Spain in 1863, for Africa and America in 1868, for Italy in 1869. The movement of dispersion continued and spread; the number of establishments was already 170. It was a centre of great activity and considerable enthusiasm. The persons who had presided at the first attempt and at the marvellous developments of the hospitaller work still superintended its general operation; even their presence and the natural veneration, of which they were the object, contributed to give cohesion to this great body, and to establish the force of centralization.

In Rome Pope Leo XIII had just succeeded Pius IX. On April 16, 1878, the Abbé Lelièvre obtained an audience from the Sovereign Pontiff in the name of the congregation, and sent this account of it: After a great many questions and replies "on the nature of the work, its origin, its means of existence, the countries where it is established, the number of vocations, Leo XIII came to this important question: 'How do you stand as to the approbation of the congregation and of its rule?' I told him what had taken place in 1854. His Holiness continued: 'Do your Superiors wish now to ask for the approbation of the rule? Do they desire it?' I replied: 'Their desire, above all, is to conform themselves on this point to the views of your Holiness.' I repeated: 'There is one point in

the constitutions of the Little Sisters of the Poor which the Superiors have very much at heart, and which I believe, like them, to be of great importance. It is that regarding the conservation of poverty as it is now practised. According to the constitutions, the houses are not allowed to have either endowments or fixed incomes or regular allocations from the civil administration; they have to depend entirely on the charities of the faithful and on the alms collected by the Sisters. There are three reasons why the Superiors considered it to be of the highest importance that this should continue to be so. The first is the maintenance of the spirit of faith and of poverty amongst the Sisters themselves; secondly, the edification of the public, because the sight of the Sisters who go begging for their poor is precisely what touches even hardened hearts, and causes God to be glorified. It is this destitution which saves the houses, for civil administration could easily determine to seize them if they had properties and incomes to confiscate, but are restrained at the sight of the poor with whom they would then be charged without having any means to maintain them.' I ended by saying how greatly Providence had shown itself in favour of this manner of action. The Pope did not interrupt me at all: he simply gave signs of assent."

Events have their fitting and providential moments which make undertakings prosper. The congregation had reached its crisis, and the approbation of its rules was placed before Rome and La

Tour Saint-Joseph. Mgr. Place, who just succeeded Cardinal Saint-Marc as Archbishop of Rennes, entered into these views and solicited, as Ordinary of the place, testimonial letters from all the Bishops who had, in their respective dioceses, one or several houses of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Such is the usual canonical proceeding. As the institution embraced about 170 houses, it was equivalent in extent to a "plebiscitum" in the highest acceptation of the word, of which the Holy See had the disposal and supreme sentence. Whilst the testimony of the different Bishops of the dioceses was being received, the hospitaller congregation gave itself to prayer, and in all the houses they besought Heaven for the precious favour.

The testimonial letter of the Archbishop of Rennes ran thus: "These constitutions, as they have been presented to the examination of the Sacred Congregation, have already been put to the proof. The underlined corrections in the letters addressed to my predecessor the most eminent Cardinal Saint-Marc have all been faithfully adopted and introduced into the new wording of the constitutions. On the other hand, the actual state of this institute, still so recent, and yet already spread into so many different countries, the relief which it spreads among the faithful, appear to be sufficient proofs of the efficacy of the constitutions by which it is governed. One may well say, indeed, that if the finger of God is visible anywhere, it is in the establishment and propagation of the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor."

On November 28, 1878, the delegate of the mother-house officially introduced the request for approbation to the Court of Rome, and had for this purpose an audience of the holy Father. He presented the three first testimonial letters, sent from Paris, Amiens, and London, to Leo XIII. Cardinal Guibert, Archbishop of Paris, wrote: "This society was approved as a community with simple vows by a decree of July 7, 1854. The Little Sisters of the Poor now wish to have their constitutions sanctioned by the apostolic approbation; after having been submitted to the revision and corrections of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. They therefore submit themselves with entire obedience to the supreme judgement of your Holiness. It is with all my heart that I join my supplication to theirs. The extraordinary extension of this pious institute shows plainly enough how pleasing it is to the God of all mercies. A still more admirable thing is that they practise absolute poverty, they receive no incomes, and every day they beg for the necessities of their guests and for their own. Who can doubt that this marvellous example of evangelical poverty is a salutary remedy prepared for the men of our time? Experience has proved, moreover, that poverty thus practised as the foundation of the whole institute is perfectly reconciled with the existence and progress of the houses. Never has the providence of our heavenly Father, who feeds the birds of the air and gives clothing to the flowers of the field, failed the houses established in this way."

Mgr. Bataille, Bishop of Amiens, said: "Thanks to their devotedness, more than two hundred old people have been received into a home where they receive, together with the corporal care which their age demands, yet more precious succour—I mean the Divine teachings of the faith, the edification of good example, and the grace of the Sacraments. Far as they may have been from all religious practice, they return to God, live like Christians, and die at last with sentiments of the most perfect resignation and with the most touching piety. One may judge from its fruit the tree which the Lord has planted in the garden of the Church in our days. Deign to bless it again, holy Father, and, enriching it with the favour which we implore from you, make it increase yet more for the good of the poor, and for the honour of the holy Church and the glory of God."

Cardinal Manning rendered this witness to the Little Sisters of the Poor: "Their rare practice, manifestly approved by God, of the works of corporal as well as spiritual mercy, not only in this kingdom, but also in almost every country in Europe, and even in North America, surpasses all praise. I think it is sufficient to say that the charity of the Little Sisters participates in the apostolic mission, and that it conciliates in such a manner the good opinion of the heterodox in the countries deprived of the Catholic faith, that one can justly call it, God aiding, the precursor of the truth."

After having learned their contents, Leo XIII folded the three letters and remitted them to the

delegate, saying to him: "To-morrow you will carry these from me to Cardinal Ferrieri. You will tell him that I have read them, and that I remit the matter for his consideration." Emboldened with this mark of high benevolence, Abbé Lelièvre said: "There is one point to which I desire to call the attention of your Holiness, if it is allowed." "Certainly. What is it?" "There is one point in the constitutions of the Little Sisters to which the Superiors attach the greatest importance. It is the authorization for the Sisters to continue to make, as in the past, not only the ordinary vows, but that of hospitality, because it is from that vow principally that they draw strength to accomplish so many sacrifices and acts of devotedness for the poor, and it is that vow which has procured them from the Bishops the witness which your Holiness has just read. It is true that the Sacred Congregation has not yet given its sanction to this fourth vow, but neither has it prohibited it." "Are you very anxious that it should be preserved?" "There is nothing the Superiors desire more. They say it is the very essence of their work which brings them so many graces." "That is well," said the Pope.

The matter, referred to the Sacred Congregation of the Bishops and Regulars, followed the canonical proceeding. They recognized, first, that the entire position of the Little Sisters of the Poor had been discussed in 1859-1861, as well by the Congregation of the Propaganda as by that of Bishops and Regulars. They referred to the question of the plurality of novitiates, raised in 1866, which

still remained undecided. They examined some questions concerning the age and method of election of the Superiors, the visits to the houses, the age of postulants, etc., so as to put the constitutions more and more in harmony with the canonical prescriptions. The greatest interest of the discussion turned upon poverty and hospitality. This was the vital question for the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

As it happens in all deep discussion, some divergence of views was shown. Some alleged the necessity of a fund of common reservation for the extreme necessities; others spoke of the right of receiving and investing dowries; others, again, willingly admitted that the Little Sisters could live without endowments or incomes, and without being obliged to bring a dowry, but added, at the same time, that this extreme poverty, which excluded a reserve fund of any kind, constituted in the opinion of the Sacred Congregation quite an exceptional position. Finally, the decision of the consultor was favourable. "His conclusion is that they may approve of the Little Sisters living without endowment and without income." And the advice of the Prelate who prepared the case was identical: "There are to be no funds, no incomes, no regular endowment; the article concerning fixed revenues is crossed out." The fire of discussion bore equally upon the vow of hospitality. A fourth vow did not appear absolutely necessary, since the three ordinary vows sufficed to constitute a religious congregation, and that every congregation has obviously works of zeal or mercy, of which the vow of obedience

suffices to direct the applications. Finally, it was recognized that hospitality pertains to the essence of the work itself of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and the principle of the vow was admitted. When the preparatory discussions had followed their course, the congress, united under the presidency of the Cardinal Prefect, pronounced for it, and it was referred to the Sovereign Pontiff in a favourable sense.

During this time the testimonial letters of the Ordinaries of the dioceses arrived, and brought a unanimous witness in favour of a first approbation of the constitutions. France and Belgium, Spain and Italy, England, Scotland and Ireland, Germany, the United States, raised their voices in the Court of Rome to express the utility of the hospitaller work. The cause for the aged poor was heard even in the heart of the Catholic world.

The Sovereign Pontiff, in his place as the Vicar of Jesus Christ, spoke, and pronounced the supreme sentence of approbation. The decree bears the date of March 1, 1879, as if to mark the patronage of St. Joseph on the hospitaller congregation.

We quote the decree:

DECREE.*

"Our holy Father the Pope Leo XIII, at the audience granted to the undersigned Secretary of this Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars,

* Decretum.—SSmus Dominus Noster Leo Papa XIII, in audientia habita ab infrascripto Dno Secretario hujus S. Congregationis Episcoporum et Regularium Negotiis et

the 14th day of the month of February in the year 1879, having seen from many favourable letters from the Bishops in Europe, Africa, and America, whose dioceses possess the Little Sisters of the Poor, the very plentiful fruit which they bear in all parts, with all zeal and eagerness in the field of the Lord, has approved and confirmed the constitutions written here above in the French language, as they are contained in that copy, of which the autograph is preserved in the records of the most worthy Sacred Congregation for seven years, by way of experiment, so he approves and confirms, by the terms of the present decree, the jurisdiction of the Ordinary being always excepted, and according to the form of the holy canons and apostolic constitutions.

Consultationibus præpositæ, sub die decima quarta mensis Februarii anni millesimi octingentesimi septuagesimi noni, attentis tum litteris commendatitiis Europæ, Africæ et Americæ Antistitum, in quorum Diœcesibus Parvæ Sorores pauperum reperiuntur, tum uberrimo fructu quem in Agro Domini omni studio et contentione undequaque afferunt, suprascriptas constitutiones gallico idiomate exaratas, prout in hoc exemplari continentur, cujus autographum in Archivio prælaudata S. Cong^nis asservatur, approbavit et confirmavit ad septennium, per modum experimenti uti præsentis Decreti tenore approbat atque confirmat, salva Ordinariorum jurisdictione, ad formam Sacrorum Canonum et Apostolicarum Constitutionum. Datum Romæ ex Secr^ia S Cong^nis Episcoporum et Regularium sub die 1 Martii, 1879.

J. Card^s Ferrieri, *Præf^s.*

Locus Sigilli:

A. Archiepus Myræ, *Secret.*

Given at Rome at the secretary's office of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars on the first day of March, 1879.

J. CARDINAL FERRIERI, *Prefect.*

Place of the Seal.

✠ A. ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA, *Secretary.*

On learning the happy issue of the important negotiation, the mother-house wrote to its agent: "The essence of the Little Family is not altered; on the contrary, it is confirmed. We are happy; we bless God!" The acclamation, like a prolonged echo, resounded through all the houses of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

The hospitaller congregation henceforth had true guarantees for the future, as it had been twice over solemnly adopted by the Church, and as its double law of hospitality and of Providence was recognized by the supreme and divinely assisted authorities.

Then, as if to recall the remembrance of the small beginnings in the hour of triumph, and to make the contrast between the humility of the beginning and the glory of the accomplished work, Providence withdrew the work-woman of the first hour from this world.* She reposes in the cemetery of La

* The mortuary sketch which the congregation has consecrated to her as a commemorative monument is thus expressed.

"Poor as to the gifts of Nature, rich as to the gifts of grace, Jeanne Jugan rose above her condition through the

Tour Saint-Joseph, and on her tomb this inscription is to be read:

J. M. J.

✠

HERE LIES

OUR LITTLE SISTER

MARIE DE LA CROIX, BORN JEANNE JUGAN,

DIED ON THE 29TH OF AUGUST, 1879,

IN HER 86TH YEAR OF AGE,

37TH YEAR OF HER PROFESSION,

THE FIRST LITTLE SISTER OF THE POOR,

AND FIRST SUPERIOR

OF THE CONGREGATION, 1839-1843.

Requiescat in Pace.

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love of God and the love of the poor. Her faith and her good heart gave her a true understanding of the aged poor. She was the first Little Sister of the Poor, and her modest dwelling was the first home of the incipient Little Family. As she had received from above the ability to understand the poor and forlorn, so she received from the same the intelligence for the alms-collection; and the spirit of charity with which she was endowed made her discover its providential resources. She attributed all the glory to God, and never ceased to regard herself as a humble servant—the servant of the poor after having been the servant of men. Born at Cancale, October 28, 1792, she received the first old person at Saint-Servan, an old woman, at the beginning of the winter of 1839. On May 29, 1842, aged fifty years, she was elected by her companions first Superior of this new religious family. On December 23, 1843, she was divested of her charge on account of the inconsistency between the exercise of her charge and the necessary absence

for begging, or, rather, God who destined her to be the pioneer of the hospitaller family restored to her her liberty. She extended her quest for alms, obtained the Montyon prize, which conciliated public opinion, and succeeded in establishing the second home for old people in February, 1846, in the town of Rennes. Under the shelter of her age and of her reputation, the nascent congregation was enabled to develop and organize itself for the good of the Sisters of the Poor and of society. From 1852, having retired to the mother-house, she led a humble and retired life, effacing herself before her former companions. She was Sister of the General Council from the month of December, 1853, to the month of June, 1878. The town of Saint-Servan honoured her memory by naming (1866) Rue Jeanne Jugan, the street where the home for the old people is situated in the town. She died at La Tour Saint-Joseph, forgotten by men, and in the weakness of her great age on August 29, 1879, at the age of eighty-six years. Her memory is a benediction and her works praise her."

THIRD PART

IN THE TWO HEMISPHERES

CHAPTER XXIX

IN MALTA AND IN ITALY

In the island of Malta and in Sicily, Naples and Rome—The double horizon of hospice work, in time and in eternity.

In 1878 the hospitaller work introduced by Mr. Galea and Mr. Asphar, merchants, came to the island of Malta. The Governor received with respect an institution which the English flag covered in the three united kingdoms; even the Duchess of Edinburgh honoured the newly-started home with a visit and her alms. If the rich of the world can do much by their credit, the humble also contribute largely to these undertakings. The boatmen of the harbour gave a penny a week out of their pay, and thus raised a weekly collection of seven or eight shillings, towards the erection of a home for old people in their island. On the other hand, history shows reverses and corrections. It happened that the Little Sisters had the idea of installing themselves in an ancient palace of the celebrated Knights of Malta, uninhabited for twenty-five years, and a fief of the Crown. They obtained it on lease in 1880, and later on purchased the property for £1,533 sterling. The building reverted to the service of religion and charity under a form appropriate to modern times.

In 1878 also the hospitaller work came to Sicily, and was established at Catania at the appeal of

Mgr. Dusmet. The appearance of the Little Sisters in the market-place occasioned a beautiful scene of charity. The commandant of the civil guards and a group of notables introduced the begging Sisters; there was an avalanche of vegetables, pennies, and praises, everyone expressing his pleasure by gesture and by voice at having at last a home for the aged. Enthusiasm lasts but a short time, but it manifests the keen sentiment of the soul and helps to urge on the works which call it forth.

The following year the benefactors gave a feast to the inhabitants of the home; they saw for themselves the contentment of the poor, the happy results of the work, and the utility of their co-operation. The evening after the feast the old people passed remarks among themselves. One of them, who was the oracle of his companions because he was near his hundredth year, said: "It really seems that we are in a new world. Formerly we had to serve the rich people; we were not considered. Now all is changed; we are honoured and served by the great of the town, and all this happiness comes to us from the God who loves us as His children."

The public took interest in this work. In 1880 Mr. Platania gave a piece of ground; in 1881 the King of Italy granted 1,000 lire on the occasion of his journey to Catania; in 1882 a lottery was worked very satisfactorily, and the first stone of the establishment was laid. Before a numerous assembly Mgr. Dusmet described what was being done at Saint Agatha, and exclaimed: "What is the mysterious art put in movement to work these

marvels? The Little Sisters do not show themselves with sad looks, dreamy or absorbed; they do not look at all like missionaries, do not dispute, do not importune, do not exclaim, do not wrangle at all. The secret of the Little Sisters is love. Hence they show the promptings of a mother's heart, the piety of a daughter; they accomplish the lowest offices with the patience of a good housewife. They show delicacy and reserve, even to scrupulosity: hence their profound respect, their reverence for their old charges. Come, Catanians, hasten the development of the building which is to serve generations and generations of unfortunate old people. Diminish the phalanx of beggars in the country."

A year later the inauguration of the new establishment took place. One witness has given a joyful account of this festival: "It was a quarter to twelve—a very hot time of the day. The whole gallery, the rooms for the old people, and the corridors were decorated with garlands. Three Sisters in the kitchen were not enough for the task, for all the stoves were glowing. In front of the house above the gallery was a beautiful picture of Saint Agatha surrounded with festoons of flowers; in the court a succession of carriages, from which a quantity of people in smart dresses descended. Here is the host coming; he is a Benedictine—the Archbishop himself. He is a head taller than the six other Benedictines who form his retinue. He blesses all those beautifully dressed guests as he passes by—Princesses, Marquises, Countesses, citi-

zens, as well as a great number of gentlemen, of whom the Mayor of Catania was one, and without further ceremony goes to the men's hall, says grace, girds on a napkin, and serves the soup, which is macaroni; after the fried macaroni, there is roasted meat, then fish, ices, biscuits, strawberries with sugar, all abundant and of the best quality. Neither was the wine of Sicily, white and red, spared. A dozen of the first benefactors of the house helped the Prelate in his task, whilst the others served the infirm, and the ladies in costumes of all colours waited on the women. I believe there were as many grand ladies to serve as there were old ones to be served." At that moment there were 108 old people in the home.

When the festival for the poor was over, all hastened to hear the toast of the Mayor. "Addressing the Archbishop, he said in a few lively sentences, that he thanked them in his own name, in the name of the whole town of Catania, for the work which he had established; that he himself and all the municipal administration would be too happy to co-operate for the good of the house, at any time they should have the chance." Thereupon there was a short flourish from the municipal band, after which the Mayor spoke again and said: "There still remains another debt of gratitude to pay. I cannot pass over in silence the devotedness, zeal, courage, and intrepidity of these young women who have left their country, their family, all that was dear to them, to come and devote themselves to the service of strangers. I am eager to say that we

admire them, we venerate them, we love them. These are the sentiments of all the inhabitants of Catania without exception; it is thus a public testimony which I render here, in the name of all my fellow-citizens, to their work and to the manner in which they accomplish it among us."

On January 18, 1879, the hospitaller work began in Naples. We find this account from the pen of an editor of reputation, R. De Zerbi: "One day a poor creature came to my office to ask charity. She did not ask for money, but that I would publish in my paper that an old woman was lying ill without clothing, without help, in such a place, and that those who had hearts were invited to help her. I did it. Some weeks after I learned that a pious lady, having read the article, had taken it to the Little Sisters, and that these, having been to see the poor old woman, had taken her in their arms, and had brought her to their house situated in the Corso Victor Emmanuel. It is thus I learned of the existence of the Little Sisters. They came from France to Naples about three or four years ago—twelve, like the Apostles. They rented a house in the Corso, and installed themselves there, not alone, by any means, but with forty poor old people whom they had soon found out, and who were worthy of all pity, and had been left destitute. They took this place without any other guarantee than charity, and not being able to believe that it would fail them, as they felt it so vividly palpitating in their own hearts. They soon perceived

that charity also blossoms in this town, for they met it at every step. Then they erected the building which they now occupy; they have not been able yet to pay for it entirely, but they are sure that, little by little, with small gifts of charity, they will succeed in paying even the last cent. It is there they live with eighty old people, expecting to be able to enlarge the building to receive 120 more." Let us complete this account by mentioning the name of the Marchioness Di Rende, who had the merit of attracting the Little Sisters of the Poor to Naples, of hiring the house for the foundation, and then of giving the ground on which the home is placed. The situation is charming; from the steps and terraces one has a complete view of the celebrated bay, the sea-shores, and even as far as Vesuvius.

Grateful and touched, the editor made this practical appeal in his paper: "Give to the Little Sisters of the Poor. They accept all—a loaf, potatoes, a bottle of wine, a bottle of oil, a pinch of salt, old clothing, a pair of shoes . . . anything, because everything becomes useful in their hands. They take from them the useful parts, gather them together, and make of it, here dishes of food to feed their old people, there clothing to cover them. They themselves serve them. Do you understand the meaning of that word 'serve'? That means to say, they assist, they guide, they wash, they comb, they dress and undress these poor old people; they dust, wash, clean the house; they cook, mend, do the housework. You should see

with what simplicity, how naturally, they do all this: they neither consider the lowliness of the task to which they are devoted nor the sublime height of the sentiment which moves them. Go and see the Little Sisters of the Poor."

The article made a sensation among the public, so much so that a crowd of people visited the house, causing charity to pour in drop by drop. The ladies profited by this favourable impression to organize a festival of beneficence which brought in 6,000 lire; and the Mayor of Naples having visited the house himself sent 1,000 lire as a mark of his approval. It will take years of charity and devotedness to bring the enterprise to perfection, and make a complete house of help for old people, but they will succeed in doing it.

The year 1880 marks a date in the annals of the congregation, the date of its establishment in Rome, the centre of the Catholic world, with the benediction and encouragement of the Sovereign Pontiff. On Saturday, October 29, the Little Sisters, having rented the old Bandinelli College, which could accommodate fifty old people, opened the hundred and eighty-sixth house of the hospitaller work. Visitors came in great number, and gave occasion, not only for having the poor brought in, but for letting people see the want of furniture, utensils, and provisions, and so to obtain them. A home of the Little Sisters is the result of the charity of all. At the same time, as the household increased, the Little Sisters presented themselves in the market-

place, making the work for the old people known, and returning with vegetables and other provisions. Such, all over, is the mechanism of a foundation: the home is opened, in come the old people, begging provides, work goes on. A little later the Mayor of Rome sent forty bolsters, twenty mattresses, fourteen lambskins, and a provision of plates and dishes; this certainly was a mark of sympathy and protection. People saw, indeed, in Rome, as everywhere else, the poor old people of the place grouping themselves around the Little Sisters, and forming with them a hospitaller family, just as one can see in nature the homogeneous elements crystallizing around a kernel, the force of attraction acting in the moral just as it does in the physical world.

The home could not remain in the provisional state, and it must develop according to its nature. On the one hand, space and salubrity were wanted —essential conditions to the development and hygiene of an agglomeration of suffering old people; on the other hand, the presence of the poor of both sexes and the character of the edifice—somewhat architectural in a town where all is monumental—necessitated expenses and extraordinary resources were wanted. Happily, they succeeded in realizing their plan by obtaining from the Maronite Fathers, through the Act of May 8, 1882, a piece of ground situated on the Esquiline Mount, adjoining the square of Saint Peter's Chains; then, by addressing an appeal to the friends of the work in different countries which was speedily answered, they were enabled

both to pay for the ground and to erect the beautiful establishment which shelters 250 poor and infirm old people. The ceremony of taking possession was performed on August 31, 1884. The Cardinal-Vicar, Mgr. Parrocchi, came to bless the house. Pope Leo XIII, who had deigned to take interest in the enterprise, sent as a personal gift a beautiful black horse, which they harnessed to the alms-cart, and which thus discharged in the streets of Rome and in the country helped the Sisters in their works of charity.

From the galleries and windows in the home of the Little Sisters of the Poor the eye rests on the Coliseum and the dome of Saint Peter's—ancient and new Rome. When the gaze and the mind of the spectator have been absorbed long enough in contemplating the Coliseum and the Roman antiquities, as it falls on the home itself, the eye perceives other ruins in human form, and the spectator, thinking of these hundreds of homes for old people scattered all over the world, and of these extreme forms of our existence, draws a touching comparison. Here is the seat of old age with its different aspects, its progressive manifestations, its various types; here one touches the limits of human life and the longevity of the species. Antiquities of history and antiquities of race, ruins of things and ruins of bodies—consuming time preys upon the one and the other, putting upon them the aureole of respect and the marks of decay. Then the dome of Saint Peter's, appearing on the same horizon, brings thoughts of life and of the resurrec-

tion, and makes the soul understand with singular penetration the words of the Christian hope, like a distant echo from Apostolic times: I believe in the resurrection of the body; I believe in eternal life! Charity moves on this double horizon, assisting the sinking body and helping to raise the soul, it co-operates in the work of death and the work of life.

CHAPTER XXX

IN SICILY

The four houses—The neighbourhood of Etna—The poor Lazarus—The most beautiful sanctuary of charity.

THE cluster in Sicily with its four houses in Catania, Acireale, Messina, and Modica demands attention.

The Bishop and the municipality of Acireale, admirers of the home in Catania, of which we have related the success, wished to benefit their district with an establishment which would not burden the Budget in any way. In 1881 they began in an old convent until a building was commenced on a site of which three-fourths was a gift. Two souvenirs have remained of the old convent. As there was no wash-house and often no water, the Little Sisters had to wash the linen of the home at some distance. It was, it appears, quite a curiosity to see the Sisters wash, and people came to look on. As one may suppose, after some weeks of this exercise of humility and simplicity, the Little Sisters managed as well as they could, and did their work at home. The other souvenir is of a different nature. Acireale extends itself in the plain at the foot of Etna, and enjoys a magnifcent view of the mountain and volcano; but in the month of March, 1883, the igneous matter was in commotion, and Etna made its fury felt by casting ashes far and wide, and by

shaking the earth. The old people were frightened, and one of the beams of the house was split throughout its length. When the shocks were strong it seemed to them that about twenty railways were passing under the earth, and that their beds were lifted a yard high; when the earthquake was slight, they felt themselves gently rocked. Tranquillity was re-established, and by way of compensation the lava supplied some of the materials for the building.

As Baron Pennisi had been the principal agent in the foundation at Acireale, so the Abbé Ciccolo introduced the Little Sisters of the Poor to the Archbishop, Prefect, and Mayor of Messina. They arrived in that large and beautiful town on February 27, 1882. The first old person they received was a blind man. They made him porter. When anyone came, the good man called for the Sisters, and in the meantime, spoke well of the house to make the caller patient. But not being sure when he entered how he would be treated by the Little Sisters, the old man took care to hide some pence and farthings in case of need; but when he had experienced their treatment, he brought his poor treasure to the good Mother, saying: "Take it; it is quite useless to me, and, besides, I only want to love God and sing." In reality, he sang all day to show that he was not sad, and because the priest had said to him that the good God loves cheerful hearts. A woman eighty years old, equally blind, was admitted at the beginning of the foundation. She experienced the kindness of the Sisters, and said: "My God, grant that I may see just

for one little moment, so that I may look upon these good Sisters who take such care of me." As her petition was not answered, she added: "My God, do as much good to the souls in purgatory as they do to me!" One knows that in countries where the sun is fierce and the sky always blue, blindness is the commonest infirmity; but the clients of the home include the blind, deaf, dumb, lame, paralyzed, every debilty and infirmity, occasioned by circumstances and climates. The first collection in the market-place was successful, for they received a large sack of vegetables, a basket with macaroni, meat, fish, oranges, twelve plates, six bowls, three saucepans, some tongs, soap, a bottle of ink, paper and pens. On the other hand, some good persons brought wine and oil to the home, old furniture, and all kinds of things. At last, Mgr. Guarino had the satisfaction of blessing the house and all these poor creatures.

But scarcely had they begun to prosper than they began to suffer. There were still poor who begged for pity, and there was no more room. Here was indeed a case of compassion. They discovered a miserable person in the district lying under a staircase, covered with wounds, one hand rotting and one foot burned. It was Lazarus in person, but Lazarus blind, eaten by vermin, starving and dying of weakness. They raised him up, washed him, dressed his wounds, put him in a clean bed, restored him with a little broth and wine, and the good man, suddenly casting off his despair, cried out: "I am in Paradise!" This is the kind of thing

that moves and incites benefactors. There is no foundation which has not in its assets some history of this kind, because the home when opened becomes the inheritance of all these human wrecks, of these lamentable infirmities, which withdraw from human sight; and then, when the home is at work, it prevents, through the very fact of its existence, the renewal of this extreme misery. Ah, how often, since the distant times of Saint-Servan, have the Little Sisters met with old age—destitute, desolate, and helpless, hidden away in any hole, keeping out of human sight, as though ashamed of itself —and how have they hastened to create hospices for it in every country. How well benefactors have seconded them, and how society has understood the work!

Let us return to the house at Messina. For some unknown reason the first steps were difficult to overcome, and for five years the hospitaller Sisters sought in vain for a spot to place their establishment. At last, on June 13, 1888, a lady presented herself, offering a property for sale. The Little Sisters went to see it. They were surprised to see a vast enclosure and a large house, and the horizon for the future opened out before them. Indeed, that property was providentially disposed for enriching the city with an hospice worthy of its importance.

The municipality of Modica, being informed of what had been done in the three towns, judged that an hospice for old people on the system of the Little Sisters of the Poor was what they wanted. The Bishop supported the request, and an old

convent, placed at the disposition of the hospitaller Sisters by the town, served them as a house of foundation on January 3, 1885. Some natural grottoes, of which several are remarkable, drew travellers to the country, and served in case of need as a place of refuge to the poor. It is from here that the first old people were taken, and they considered themselves quite happy in having a house and a bed. It may easily be conceived that the inmates examine closely those who take care of them. Now, on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the Little Sisters held, as is the custom in the Order, the ceremony of the renewal of vows, and the old people of Modica were very much moved on seeing it. A blind man translated their thoughts by asking during the day: "Where are those seven virgins whom God has given us to take care of us?" They understood at that moment the sublimity of Christian hospitality, which chooses persons consecrated to God to make the servants of the poor. Charity, to possess all its fire and all its tenderness, demands a virginal heart. It has no more beautiful sanctuary.

CHAPTER XXXI

IN ITALY

Nine new foundations—In Campania—The foundation at Milan—Laying the first stone in Turin—The little Madonnas of Florence—The Pope's house.

THE number of houses for old people increased in Italy; together with Aosta, Naples, Rome, and the four establishments in Sicily already mentioned, we find Turin in 1883, Milan, Arienzo, Nola, and Florence in 1883, Cuneo in 1883, Andria and Perugia in 1886, and Lucca in 1887. At this date the number of establishments reached the total of sixteen.

The origin of these homes for old people presents a curious variety. Whilst at Cuneo two devoted friends of the working class bought, at the price of 13,500 lire, a small property, and installed the Little Sisters in it, well knowing that the social assistance embraces all ages, and that every age has its own manner of assistance, at Lucca the Count Sardi brought negotiations to a successful issue, and saw the charitable hospice opened. Whilst the Little Sisters at Aosta travelled over the roads between Monte Rosa and Mont Blanc to support their hundred poor, and received 4,000 lire from the King of Italy, an unequivocal mark of approbation, the municipality of Andria offered the expenses of the journey of the Sisters and the

possession of a house for several years, on condition that they formed a foundation in the town. Some small details will not be out of place here.

At Andria the carabineers one day prayed the begging Sisters to enter the barracks, because they and their comrades clubbed together. When they had entered, the officer in command, after a very cordial eulogy on the assistance given by the Sisters to decrepit age, gave two parcels of men's clothing, and added 60 kilos of excellent dough to make a feast. On their part, the town guards brought 136 eggs, and as they were pleased with their visit they made several other small gifts. Some masons working in the neighbourhood also joined together and offered 100 kilos of excellent vegetables. The agricultural school sent a barrel of 50 litres of wine from time to time. If the value of the gift be measured by the sentiments which inspire it, and sometimes by the sacrifice which it imposes, these gifts must be considered worthy of praise. The reader thus sees in what surroundings the Little Sister moves, and how she comes in contact with persons of all conditions at the precise moment when the spirit of men is exalted by beneficence and pity for the unhappy.

Nola and Arienzo are two homes situated in Campania, among the fertile fields of maize, corn, and hemp, where the vines hang from the young elms, where the olive-trees and orange-trees are laden with fruit—in short, the paradise of poverty for the Little Sisters who go begging, who some-

times, like the bees, plunder from flower to flower the provisions for every day, and sometimes, like the ants, gather bit by bit the provision for the winter.

Here are the circumstances under which the house at Arienzo raised its poultry-yard. In 1883 they received an old man who could only be fed with milk. As the region is hot, forage was scarce in the home, as well as animals. They told him to pray to Saint Joseph to send a milk cow, and they prayed with him, after having put the facsimile of what they wanted at the feet of the saint's statue. This was in October, and behold, on Sunday, November 4, a stranger entered with a cow. The good Mother asks: "For whom is this cow?" "For you, Sister." "Who sends it?" "Saint Joseph." And he produces a note with these words: "Saint Joseph sends this cow to the Little Sisters of the Poor." They only knew that the individual and the cow had been five hours on the way. Then the cow was received in triumph by the Little Sisters and by the old people, who wept with emotion. They had milk, and even a little butter and cheese. Everybody in the neighbourhood felt pleasure in giving grass for Saint Joseph's cow, as they called it.

The municipality of Nola found in the annual institution of a charity car an ingenious means of recreating the population and assisting the home. These gentlemen made a collection at the houses of some of the notables of the neighbourhood, and with the produce suspended provisions of bacon, fat, cod, cheese, etc., to a car drawn by a horse and a bull.

On the day fixed, the interesting equipage gravely advanced towards the principal place of the city, where, in the presence of the authorities and the population, who dressed in festal clothes, the Bishop or his delegate solemnly blessed the convoy of charity. Then, to the cheerful sound of music, the acclamation of the people, and the appeals of the organizers, the retinue travelled through the streets and the suburbs of the town, receiving on the way the alimentary gifts offered by the inhabitants. At last it arrived in triumph with its cargo forming a pyramid at the home of the aged, bringing with it joy, abundance, and the consolation of public sympathy.

This episode shows that the secret of the idyll is not lost in the country of Virgil, only the idyll is still more touching in the service of charity. The two houses of Campania have been useful to the country, as the prefecture of Caserta decorated both with a reward of merit, consisting of a diploma full of praise, a silver medal, and a sum of 100 lire.

Turin, Milan, Florence lead us to the great centres and big establishments. It is to be noted that these foundations attracted but little attention, and were but of little importance in the eyes of the public so long as they remained confined to hired houses. Their principal benefactors during this first period were the small tradesmen and the little shops. It seems that Count Lurani at Milan may have had the intuition of this state of things, for the Little Sisters were surprised when entering on February 15, 1882, into the foundation-house to

perceive a beautiful statue of Saint Joseph placed on the mantelpiece, and to hear their benefactor say that he had wished their Holy Protector to be the first in the house and before them, in order to obtain everything that was wanted. And it really was so, for two years later the rich dowry of a Little Sister and the liberalities of the Lurani family allowed them to purchase a large garden situated in the Via Degli Orti, and to commence a building which public sympathy, henceforth awakened, took upon itself to accomplish under excellent conditions. In reality the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor is loved, appreciated, and prosperous in this beautful and important town.

Two years after the foundation of Milan, the Little Sisters of Turin succeeded in obtaining a piece of ground situated at Tesoriera, near the town and in good air, with the Alpine range and its snowy summits in the distance. The laying of the first stone gave occasion for an imposing ceremony under the patronage of His Highness the Duke of Aosta. On April 28, 1885, on a beautiful spring afternoon, the crowd of guests came from the great city and flocked together around a platform surmounted by an elegant tent decorated with shrubs, flowers, and various foliage. The Duke had said: "Instead of taking bread from the poor we ought to give it to them, therefore I will not allow this festival to cause the least expense to the Little Sisters of the Poor. My steward will take charge of all."

Opposite the platform, and where a good view

could be had, were some benches which the true proprietors of the establishments—that is to say, about sixty old people—advancing limpingly from the omnibuses, came to occupy and adorn with their venerable presence, under the benevolent regards of the assembly. Cardinal Alimonda and the clergy soon appeared on the scene. At four o'clock the Prince made his entrance, accompanied by his attendants. He went and talked with the Little Sisters, took great interest in learning the number of old people whom they could receive, how they treated them, and how they could relieve them, how the subscription was progressing, and what resources they hoped to have in order to bring the enterprise to a successful issue. The immediate preparations being terminated, and the different authorities having taken their place on the platform, a lawyer devoted to the cause, Mr. Massa, made a speech which voiced the sentiments of the assembly. In a heartfelt manner and with great eloquence, he praised the noble benevolence of the Sisters, and spoke of the results so sure and so consoling of the hospitaller work. His Highness the Duke of Aosta then proceeded to lay the first stone and cemented it, while a cheerful murmur arose from the crowd of friends who could not restrain their pleasure. The Cardinal Archbishop pronounced the liturgical prayers and gave the blessing. Then he exhorted the sympathetic assembly to help the charitable enterprise liberally, assuring them that offerings so well employed would draw blessings from heaven on their families.

Florence followed the example of Turin and Milan, and had similar inaugurations: a hired house, a few poor, assistance from the small tradesmen, and the silent alms of a few good people. But the Florentine people, seeing the new Sisters appear, of whom they knew neither the name nor the work, began to call them by a name full of artistic meaning, "Le Madonnine" (the Little Madonnas). The same thought had already been expressed in the discourse of Cardinal Alimonda at Turin: "Look at the Little Sisters, veiled like the Madonna in their black cloaks!" Here is an impression to be noted, together with its poetry and its symbolism. Soon the name of the Little Sisters of the Poor was known, and it was soon well known, because it expresses both their religious title and their social motive. Also the period of trial soon ceased, because the hospitaller work touched the heart of the Princess Strozzi, who became the protector of the new home, and contributed an important sum for its material development. The resident strangers, drawn to Florence by the beauty of the climate and the monuments, joined with the population in maintaining the benevolent establishment of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Let us conclude with the foundation at Perugia, which was owing entirely to the initiative of Pope Leo XIII. Before his elevation to the Sovereign Pontificate Mgr. Pecci had been Archbishop of this diocese, and in memory of this event he wished to endow the town with a lasting monument of his

solicitude and affection. The Pope fixed his choice on the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor. He deigned to purchase a house with a garden in the town of Perugia, and made a gift of it to the Little Sisters, inviting them to found there one of their homes for old people. Receiving them in audience at the palace of the Vatican on June 16, the Sovereign Pontiff said to them: "When people know you, when people see your life of sacrifice, they will love you at Perugia." On June 18, 1886, the Little Sisters opened the home. By a remarkable coincidence the first old man received was called Peter and the second Paul, as if Providence had intended to recall the Apostolic souvenir. This incident interested the Holy Father. A marble slab placed on the primitive edifice commemorates the gift and the name of the august donor.

CHAPTER XXXII

IN SPAIN

Sixteen new foundations—Agreement between two similar works—Procession at Seville—The fleet at Ferrol—The house of the four saints—Retrospective study.

THE number of foundations is steadily increasing in Spain: Toledo in 1880; Valladolid, Osuna, a second house in Barcelona in 1881; Ferrol, Cartagena, Alicante, Segovia in 1882; Puerto, Santa-Maria, Ronda in 1883; a second house in Madrid, Ubeda, Ciudad Real in 1884; Talavera de la Reyna in 1885; Vals in 1886; Vich in 1888.

We have referred to a similar work organized in Spain about 1873. Without detracting in the least from the success, the merit, and the devotedness of these Sisters, without by any means pretending to a monopoly of a branch of charity, it was nevertheless impossible to prolong this parallelism, and some settlement must be arrived at. As the congregations look to the Holy See for their religious constitutions and their canonical position, it was therefore at Rome that the question of right must be treated, and it is there that the matter was submitted in the name of the Little Sisters of the Poor by the Rev. Abbé Lelièvre, who presented a formal document with a paragraph by the Cardinal of Toledo, the Archbishops of Seville and Barcelona, thus couched: "The name of a community recognized

by the Holy See is for that community a property to which its honour is attached before the public both as regards donations and vocations. It is inevitable that the existence of two communities bearing the same name, living in the same country, and consecrating themselves to the same works of mercy, and living by collecting alms from the public should cause continual misapprehensions and conflicts which must ultimately give scandal. At the cost of great sacrifices, through the visible effect of Divine protection, and also thanks, we must say, to the sympathy and efficacious co-operation of our Lords the Bishops, the Little Sisters of the Poor count to-day thirty-six establishments in Spain, and several others at the present time are projected. Their work prospers in the greatest towns of the peninsula, especially in Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, Malaga, Granada. A like case occurred about twenty years ago in England; the Sacred Congregation obliged the Sisters who had appropriated the name of "Little Sisters of the Poor" to give up that name, which they did. And further, the same congregation in agreement with the metropolitan authority, ruled subsequently that the Sisters in question should never form any establishments in the towns where there was a house of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and to this they conformed."

Cardinal Moreno then added these few lines:

"According to my knowledge the said religious are the primitive Little Sisters of the Poor, established in this diocese and in other dioceses of Spain,

and who observe their statutes faithfully, and render great services to religion and to the State. Therefore I consider them worthy of the goodwill of the Holy See, and that it is just and proper that their rights should be maintained.

"MADRID,
"December 6, 1881."

The affair, after different stages in Spain and in Rome, was brought to its official conclusion on July 13, 1882, at the Apostolic Nunciature of Madrid as proved by a document entitled: "Agreement signed by the legal representatives of the institutes of the Little Sisters of the Poor at Rennes, and of the Little Sisters of the destitute old people of Valence," where it is said: "As it is an unchangeable axiom of the Holy See, in conformity with the rule of the holy canons and Apostolic constitutions, not to allow two different institutions to bear the same name or one almost identical, they agree and determine that the old title of 'Hermanitas de los Pobres,' remaining attached to the Sisters of the French institute in Spain, the Spanish institute shall assume the title of 'Hermanitas de los Ancianos desemparados.'" A clause was joined to this decision in which it was specified that: "The object of the two institutions being the same, it is sanctioned for the common advantage that the custom actually established, which is, that in the villages, territories, suburbs, and towns, where houses of the one institute are found, houses of the other shall not be opened." The said agreement

was submitted to the approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff and rendered obligatory in these terms:

"In the audience granted on July 21, 1882, His Holiness, having fully considered all that is connected with the aforesaid agreement, has approved and confirmed it, and has ordered the institutions concerned to observe it exactly for the future, no pretext forming any justification to the contrary.

"J. CARDINAL FERRIERI, *Prefect.*"

Let us now resume our anecdotes. The house in Seville had begun very modestly with five women and two men on March 12, 1878; so that the Feast of Saint Joseph, which is traditional with the Little Sisters, found them in all the destitution of a recent foundation. However, by great exertions, they succeeded in spreading the table for a feast; they placed a small table and a trunk together, the two most important pieces of furniture of the home, and covered them with white napkins; then some great ladies made it their pleasure to serve the meal and to show the old people that they had protectors.

The capital of Andalusia would not be contented with an hospice confined between the four walls of a hired house; so, after twenty-two months of this provisional state of things and of great activity, some friends of France and Spain sustained the little foundresses with their credit, and the Sisters purchased the large garden of San Benito with its

thousand feet of orange-trees, its fragrant violets, and its dwelling-house. They took possession on June 15, 1880, and, seeing that the General commanding the place sent twenty-four soldiers, seven carts, and the horses of the regiment to help the Little Sisters to remove their old furniture and their old men and women, the inauguration had quite a military character. It was also done religiously, for on June 27, at six o'clock in the evening, when the sun set on the horizon and extinguished its burning fires, the neighbouring church was filled with people, a brilliant preacher mounted the pulpit and pronounced the eulogy of charity; then the Mayor of the great town carried the banner of Saint Joseph, the music sounded its cheerful notes, and the procession formed and accompanied the Blessed Sacrament to its new dwelling. The imposing procession entered the garden of San Benito; our Lord, carried under the canopy, advanced through the orange-trees and went all round the property to bless it and make it the chosen dwelling for His poor, whilst the Archbishop, Mgr. Lluch, happy at this manifestation of faith and in seeing the happiness of the old people, stood in the centre of the garden. The invalids, delighted with what they saw, watched from the windows of the building and lifted their hands to Heaven. Benevolence has also its days of glory and heartfelt joys.

Six years of effort and of temporary measures were again necessary before the laying of the first stone of the edifice; six years of accumulation in the rooms, passages, and store-rooms of service; six

years of refusal of admission to two-thirds of the old invalids who asked for places; six years of prayers to Heaven and of appeals for help. At last, on June 6, 1886, a new Archbishop accomplished the liturgical rites before the open trenches, accumulated materials, and squads of workmen were occupied in laying the first stone. The Captain-General, the Mayor, and a crowd of the inhabitants of Seville assisted at the ceremony. This same year, the learned Cardinal Gonzales rendered this valuable testimony to the hospitaller work: "We attest and make known that the pious congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor, established in our archdiocese, has shown itself truly recommendable through Christian virtue which the Sisters practise; but still more through an indefatigable charity towards the poor, which beautiful example rightly attracts the admiration and praise of all men." This eulogy was addressed to the Holy See.

Foundations sometimes have a distant origin, and the idea, like a river which first runs under the earth, ends by bursting forth. Now, at the epoch when the Little Sisters appeared in Spain in 1863, Señor Manuel Torrente inhabited Barcelona, and he had been witness of the first popularity and the first success of the hospitaller work. Having returned to Ferrol, his native country, he took pleasure in explaining how the hospices for old people were organized and worked on the system of the Little Sisters of the Poor. He conversed particularly with Don Victoriano Suancez, Captain-General of the Navy, and with Don Pedro Diaz de Herrera, com-

mander of the frigate *Almansa*, and so effectually that the three persons came to an agreement, and resolved to establish the charitable work at Ferrol. Their demand having been agreed to by the mother-house, a concert was organized which brought 1,250 pesetas, and covered the expenses of installation. A house was rented, which was washed like the deck of a ship by the sailors of the fleet, and divided into compartments by the carpenters of the navy. On February 2, 1882, the Little Sisters of the Poor, the object of all these cares, arrived and opened the home for old people, not without being honoured with a first-class serenade, executed by the bands of the crews of the ships.

The first house at Barcelona had become a vast hospice, where 325 persons, infirm and poor, found shelter. However, it was no longer sufficient, and the refusal which it was continually necessary to give to the entreaties of so many other old people ended by touching the hearts of the Little Sisters so powerfully that it was decided in the counsel of the congregation to erect a second establishment. For three weeks the future Superior went about the streets without finding a convenient place, when, passing through a street but little frequented, she saw an open door, and through the door a large enclosure in which were buildings of an old empty factory. A child came up, and said: "Do you want to see my father?" "No, we do not want to see anyone." "Do you want to visit the property?" "No, we do not want to visit any-

thing." One glance was sufficient to perceive the advantages of the situation. Several friends of the work interested themselves in the matter, and concluded the purchase, the bank of Barcelona lent half of the sum, and the owner waited for the other half. The affair promised well.

The following story reveals the typical Spaniard. It appeared that the protectors of the first house were not without anxiety, and that they had given way to irritation. So that when the good Mother, after the little unpleasantness, appeared at the house of the principal benefactor: "Sister," said the agent to her, "you are ambitious. You have a house sufficiently large, beautiful, and complete, enough mouths to feed, and plenty of trouble to feed them; that ought to content you." Many others echoed this sentiment. The good Mother replied that it was a question of the good of the poor, and that three times the number it could contain presented themselves at the large house, that it was impossible to leave so many poor unhappy people on the street. Now, some time after, it happened that a rich man wished to erect a monument in memory of his wife, and for the purpose, he built at his own expense the chapel of the second house. Then a neighbouring proprietor made the unconditional gift of 1,500 metres of ground to complete the acquisition and to render it quite suitable. The old dye works, properly restored, already sheltered 100 old people.

The home in Madrid counted 316 poor, quite a population of old people. At the same time the Sisters were in great want of linen, and it was im-

possible to meet the requests for admission. What was to be done? They decided to make a novena, both for clothing and a second house. Now one afternoon in January a stranger presented himself, and said in a decided tone: "How can a cart get into your place?" They took him to the carriage entrance, and at his request opened it, and a cart full of goods entered. It was unloaded, and sixty-seven pieces of unbleached cotton, forming a total of 3,717 metres, were counted. "Do not shut the gate yet," said the stranger. Soon a second cartload appeared, bringing 250 woollen blankets. There was now no lack of linen and bedding. It was a person who, at the moment of death, had thought of the poor and had given orders to carry this gift to the home for old people.

Having provided for immediate necessities, it was necessary to provide for a settled home. The Little Sisters began to examine the suburbs of the capital. But they said: "Quite unintentionally, we always found ourselves returning to the quarter of Prosperidad." They believed they saw in this a providential indication, and as this place is situated at a sufficient distance from the first house, they rented a dwelling and installed a new home there, which was transferred on April 19, 1888, to buildings erected on neighbouring grounds. The most remarkable gifts were 6,000 douros from a Marquis and a still greater sum from a Canon of Guatemala.

Henceforth there were two homes in Madrid and in Barcelona. In similar cases the begging Sisters make a division. They decide on certain boundaries

of the districts of the town and the environs, then each group works in the division allotted to it, without trespassing on that of the others. Charity is characterized by method; it is a friend of order, of amiability, and of the common good. Benefactors, far from being annoyed, are willingly interested in the establishment which receives the poor of the neighbourhood.

It is impossible to pass by the foundation of Cartagena in silence, where a dwelling rich in pious souvenirs was given by the Bishop to the Little Sisters of the Poor. On November 15, 1882, they took possession of an antique dwelling, crumbling with age, where a family of saints, Leander, Fulgentius, Isidore, and Florentina had lived in remote times. God, who saw that this venerable dwelling was falling into ruins, and was going, perhaps, to pass to profane uses, destined it for the poor, and thus, when time finished its work of destruction, Providence took means to edify in this same place a complete establishment of benevolence.

The hospitaller institution of the Little Sisters of the Poor was suitable to the Spanish genius, and adapted itself to it marvellously, for within a period of twenty-five years it had founded forty-eight homes for old people. In this new country it did not modify in the least its methods of assistance, which are the old evangelical methods of sacrifice and devotion, of charity and of providence; but the result was that in several of these foundations there was a reproduction of the first days of the little

family. Let us hasten to draw from actual life, and to gather these remembrances, before the new material conditions have succeeded the first and effaced their traces. The correspondence of a witness* belonging to both periods has a general retrospective interest:

"I have seen a foundation which is as like as two drops of water to the first establishment of the family. It seemed to me that I saw again Chartres or Le Mans. My audience consisted of seven Little Sisters. Our oratory presented this peculiarity that it had neither doors nor windows, it only borrowed a little daylight and air from a neighbouring room. I began by saying to my audience: 'I fancy myself to be again in one of the houses of the family, such as they all were twenty-eight years ago.' This comparison touched them. 'I saw, indeed, at that time some fine establishments, beginning from that at Lille in the old brewery.'"

"Here I am at Bethlehem; no other house of our Sisters represents poverty so well. It shows everywhere in those large walls without roofs, which formerly were the dwelling-place of the children of Saint Francis, in the part of the convent which our Sisters inhabit with their thirty-two old people, after having restored it, in the kitchen, in the pantry, in the linen-room, where three-fourths of the shelves are empty, in the humble furniture. It belongs to a past century, like the majority of the inhabitants; several of these count their age by the

* The Abbé Lelièvre.

number of years (very few indeed) which they require to make them centenarians."

"Many people say, 'The Little Sisters will not be able to live here.' Your own question would be, 'Why have they established themselves in these towns which are neither very large, very rich, nor much given to charity?' It is at the feet of the cradle that I will reply; I shall say what I have seen. Our Sisters are nowhere so contented or so perfect in their vocation as in these places; these little foundations are, perhaps, those where the poor, though treated very poorly, are the most satisfied. If there are greater sufferings on the part of the body, they are compensated with what is given on the side of the spirit. I was charmed here with the simplicity with which the good Mother and the Little Sisters spoke to me about the poverty of their commencements; they estimate what has been given to them as treasures, and although in reality all that they have is scarcely more than nothing, they speak as if nothing was wanting to them to-day."

"What is there that is not lacking in this house except virtue? Indeed, what is consoling is that it is equal to their poverty, that it triumphs over it, and renders the Sisters cheerful in proportion to the privations they endure and by the very effect of these privations. Wealthy people can enrich their friends, give them gold, silver, and lands; but God alone can embellish a soul by endowing it with true virtues, and by making it taste contentment in the midst of most painful self-sacrifices. He, to whom He gives the love of poverty, is at

once richer than he who has found a gold-mine in his field; and he, who can see in the events of this world the hand of God which leads them, is more clear-sighted than any member of the institution."

"It is a true Bethlehem of the family where I have just spent the last days of this year. I find there the image of true happiness; cheerfulness reigns among those old people to an extent which is found neither in Seville nor amidst the opulence of Madrid. I do not know what makes them so happy, and the Little Sisters are as happy as their old people. The inmates play the guitar and the panderetta, or they go to the chapel; they have no more need to be anxious about the next day than the little birds to which God gives food, and with that, they have a contentment which is said to exceed wealth, and not a truer proverb exists."

"What is most beautiful in Andalusia is the virtue, the devotedness and the spirit of self-sacrifice which animates the Little Sisters, and next, the gratitude of the poor. They are simple, docile, contented with little; almost all have profited by their enforced hardships to practise virtue, and often they have lacked food. Not one of them, in all the houses which I have just visited, has made the least complaint either of the Sisters or of the management of the house."

"Barcelona: Last night I was walking in the moonlight, under the beautiful gallery in the deep silence of one of the houses, revolving in my mind its beginning and that of so many others, remember-

ing all that I had just seen in the houses of Spain. 'What a marvel!' however, I said to myself; 'and how blind one must be not to see in it the hand of God!' Tears of devotion rose to my eyes. So many things which were then projected, so many others which were not then even projected were realized in so short a time, little by little, and some of them at the present time are so perfect."

The historic and retrospective interest which is attached to this testimony leads one to ask if the Little Sisters of the Poor have not had several successive or progressive methods of doing their work. The correspondence replies: "Yes, the very first had for fundamental law 'necessity'; it imitated God by creating, as it were, something from nothing, and this lasted until 1852. The second development already showed a certain plan: the Sisters had to contrive to arrange to calculate with resources; they were forced to make much from little. This latter method still characterizes a great number of Spanish foundations. The Little Sisters of Italy and Sicily also possess some masterpieces of the kind. It prevailed elsewhere in Europe until the completion of the large Parisian buildings." Then the work changes to the large homes, with their hundreds of old people, extensive buildings and complete hospitaller organization, such as existed in a great number of houses at the end of the nineteenth century.

But is it not the same in Nature? Vigorous shoots pass through a considerable period of growth,

and for a long time the branches as yet are but feeble and small. However, the plant tends to realize its complete development without interruption, and to attain the normal vigour which belongs to its kind; then it stops, concentrates its forces, maintains its life, and fulfils the functions which have been bestowed upon it in the work of creation. The similitude is reproduced in moral order where every institution has a certain degree of power and development to reach, and continues its growth, until it has suitably realized itself to the needs of human society.

CHAPTER XXXIII

IN PORTUGAL, GIBRALTAR, AFRICA

Foundation in Lisbon—Situation at Gibraltar—The hills of Saint Augustine—Cardinal Lavigerie—The Bey of Tunis.

THE impulse towards foundations, which we have just followed in Spain, extended in the west to Portugal; in the south, to the English possession of Gibraltar. It corresponded, as we have seen, to a similar movement in Italy. They both joined along the coast of the Mediterranean—to the north, by the houses of France; to the south, by the African foundations of Oran, Bona, and Tunis. Thus the hospitaller congregation extended its sphere of action amongst the people of the Latin race, and marked its pacific conquests by so many hospices.

The foundation at Lisbon derives considerable interest from historic circumstances. We know that in the eighteenth century restrictive laws, inspired by a feigned philosophical spirit, had brought about the dispersion of religious orders from the kingdom, which, in consequence, affected the works and missions which had so much contributed to the prestige of the Portuguese name in the world. Attention having been called to this, there was a movement in favour of re-establishing these works. The hospitaller institution of the Little Sisters of the Poor appeared to several people particularly fit for this design, on account of its modern methods

and its social character; therefore, when Miss de Miranda raised the question and agreed to defray the first expenses of the establishment in Lisbon, the home which was opened on October 20, 1884, immediately attracted to itself important sympathies.

People began to see the Little Sisters in their black cloaks in the squares and streets without exciting any other popular sentiment than admiration for their charity for the aged, which always appeals to the people. The Governor of the capital had not been able to authorize the alms-collecting with official sanction on account of the said laws, but he had permitted it conditionally; and when the begging Sisters presented themselves in the market-place, the solicitor of the feudal lord himself accompanied them and publicly gave them unequivocal marks of protection. The event seemed to realize the hopes of the project.

The home had been founded six months when a chamberlain presented himself in the name of the Sovereigns, bringing several pieces of cloth to clothe the poor, and inviting the Little Sisters to go to the palace. The King and Queen gave them a most kind welcome, and were pleased to hear the account of the foundation and of the management of the hospitaller work. Encouraged and supported by their benefactors, the Little Sisters were in a position, scarcely three years after their introduction into Portugal, to sign a deed of acquisition at Lisbon which secured the future and the development of the home for the aged poor.

"The humble Little Sisters of the Poor," wrote the Patriarch of Lisbon in 1886, "bear in our midst the fruits of salvation by supporting and spiritually assisting so many destitute old people. They recommend themselves so well by their modesty, their charity, and their exemplary religion, that they have been well received by all classes of society; they have even conciliated the favour and goodwill of the governing powers."

The house in Gibraltar was opened on December 1, 1883, with a group of Sisters, whom the Superiors had appointed without troubling much about their nationality. They were Little Sisters of the Poor; they had received a sufficient welcome from the English Governor and the Catholic Bishop; they had a comfortable lodging; they had poor old people: what more did they want? Now, when Christmas came, they went to the Bishop to tell him the good news of the foundation and to offer him their New Year's greetings; but the prelate appeared to be very preoccupied, and finally he confessed to them that the Governor of the place considered that there were too many Sisters of foreign nationalities. It is right to remember the position of Gibraltar with respect to Spain and Europe—facing Africa, armed with fortifications and cannon, commanding the passage of the seas between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean. The strategical importance of the colony demands that foreigners, in order to reside there, must be supplied with an authorization strictly in accordance with the

regulations. Therefore our Little Sisters found themselves in presence of a hindrance which was not the outcome of any personal feeling against them, but which they had to overcome under penalty of failing in their enterprise. The affair was referred to London.

The temporary permission to reside there had just expired. The authorities of the place, applying the common right, notified that two Sisters had to leave the possession without delay. Sadly they went to bid their farewell to the Bishop. The prelate listened to their complaints, but immediately with a joyful air he cried out: "Well, none of you will leave. I have just received from the Government in London the authorization for the residence of six Sisters who are not English, and still more—the authorization for the collection of charities in the colony." The obstacle had only served to advance the cause.

Let us cross the Strait of Gibraltar and watch the birth of the three houses at Oran, Bona, and Tunis under the French flag, among the mixed populations of Arabs, Maltese, Italians, Spaniards, and French, who in time will blend together and will add to ethnographical science.

Algiers had become a prosperous asylum. The old Moorish house was transformed into a European establishment where old people succeed one another without leaving vacant places. Wave follows wave, the candidate who desires to enter replaces him who disappears, conducing at the same time to the joy

of success and forgetfulness of the loss which has caused it. It happened at the beginning of the year 1885 that the Little Begging Sisters passed into the neighbouring province, and for this purpose solicited the authorization of the Bishop of Oran. "But why do you not establish yourself at Oran?" asked the prelate. "Why do you not come to Oran?" many persons asked. The response was not awaited along; the following April the home was opened.

The hill of Hippone had remained deserted for centuries, and was covered with ruins. Mgr. Lavigerie wished to restore there the worship of Saint Augustine by raising a basilica and grouping works around it. One of these works ought to represent charity, and the proximity of the town of Bona permitting it, this work was confided to the Little Sisters of the Poor, who have the rule of the Holy Patriarch as the foundation of their constitutions. After making a beginning at Bona in a hired house, they established themselves at Hippone even before the erection of the sanctuary, on the portion of the hill which they had acquired, and contributed more greatly to the re-establishment of the homage paid the great doctor, in the place where his glory had shone over the West.

The home for the old people at Tunis was begun on January 10, 1882, in two Arabian houses consisting of twenty-three apartments, without upper stories, and opening on the yard. In the immense agglomeration of inhabitants, the Europeans were in the minority; thus the Little Sisters had to come in

contact with Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans, principally in the markets and various shops. The foundation was laborious.

Cardinal Lavigerie rendered this testimony to the Little Sisters of the Poor in 1886: "Everywhere this society causes the name of our Lord and Catholic charity to be blessed. Everywhere it sets the example of the purest virtue, and does honour to the Christian name. I see it in the infidel districts where, having had myself the consolation of procuring the foundation of three of its establishments—at Algiers, Tunis, Hippone, near the tomb of Saint Augustine—I am the witness of the profound impression produced on all, even on the Mohammedans, at the sight of such touching charity and humility."

In 1883 the house at Tunis was established at the extremity of the great Arabian town, but there was no water-supply for the home. The director of the waterworks was a native General living at Hemma-el-if. The Little Sisters paid him a visit. They perceived that they had forgotten to procure a letter of recommendation, and apologized for the oversight. "Ladies," said the Arab, looking at them, "why a letter of recommendation? Your habit, does not that suffice?" He said that he would take measures for them to have water gratuitously, and some time after the Minister of France transmitted them the solicited Act of concession.

But in making a visit to the General, the Little Sisters learned that the former Minister of the Bey lived in the place and that he was charitable. They at once thought of asking him for a subscription,

and presented themselves at his palace. The servants, knowing neither French nor Italian, were puzzled to know what these Sisters wanted, went to fetch an Arab who spoke French. They explain what the work is, and make their request; he repeats it to the others. These put their hand to their heart and then raised it towards heaven, which is a mark of profound respect amongst them. They then sat down near the Little Sisters to consider the European "marabouts"* from head to foot whilst the interpreter was transmitting the account to the Minister. A negro arrives with two cups of coffee on a silver tray, saying, "Bono, bono." As the Sisters did not accept it, the interpreter said that the "marabouts" were keeping Lent. The Minister sent 100 piastres.

Five years after their arrival in Tunis the Little Sisters of the Poor obtained an audience of the Bey, who previously had sent an offering to the home for old people. On the said day, the first interpreter of the palace came to receive the two Little Sisters, and introduced them into the saloon where His Excellence the Bey of Tunis was. The Prince rose and saluted them with great respect; then he expressed with a gesture his satisfaction at receiving the Sisters, and he said, through the intervention of his interpreter, that he appreciated their work, principally because it made no distinction, but was interested in all unfortunate old people. He promised that he would give 500 piastres towards the develop-

* The name given to the Mohammedan saints, especially to those who claimed to work miracles.

ment of their hospice in his capital. Such acts have a moral bearing which exceeds the value of the actual benefit, because they affect the opinion of the people and bear witness to the tolerance or approbation of the Government.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IN EUROPE

Twenty-eight new foundations—The Empress of Germany at the home at Strasbourg—The Duke of Norfolk, benefactor of Sheffield—The Canon of Dublin—Some types of priests.

RETURNING to Europe and going towards the north we find: In France seventeen new foundations—Auch in 1876; Rive-de-Gier, Saintes, Armentières, Vienne, in 1877; the third house in Lyon, Carcassonne, in 1879; the second house in Lille in 1880; Biarritz in 1883; Evreux, Granville, Elbeuf, in 1885; the second house in Marseilles, Fourmies, in 1885; Alençon in 1886; Aix, Paris (Levallois-Perret), in 1888. In Belgium two new foundations: the second house in Brussels (Anderlecht) in 1881; Verriers in 1883. In the United Kingdom nine new foundations: Brighton, a second house at Liverpool, Carlisle in 1880, Preston in 1881, Sheffield and Sunderland in 1882 (England); Dublin in 1881 (Ireland); Greenock in 1884 (Scotland); St. Helier in 1886 (Jersey). It is no longer possible for some time past to follow the hospitaller institution in the rapidity of its development. We are obliged merely to enumerate the foundations. But number has also its interest and its eloquence—above all, when it represents so many new centres of charity.

Two Sovereigns at this period gave marks of

interest in the work for the aged poor. On September 20, 1879, the Empress of Germany, accompanied by the Prefect and Mayor of Strasbourg, visited the establishment in that town. The Little Sisters and their old people in their Sunday apparel grouped in the yard, gave them a hearty welcome. The oldest woman presented a bouquet to the Sovereign, and in her great simplicity addressed some words of gratitude for this visit paid to the poor. The Empress for a long time regarded the hoary heads with their calm and contented faces of these poor people, sheltered henceforth from the storms of fortune and passion, these invalids maternally nursed in their incurable infirmities; then, remembering their past sufferings, she said, quoting the Bible, "Here is my place of refuge." After having visited the different hospitaller services, she commented on the cleanliness and simplicity of the apartments, compared this kind of assistance with that of civil administration, and contemplated another genius of charity in action, Her Majesty deigned to shake hands with every Little Sister, and said to them: "May God abundantly bless you—you and your work!" She left an offering for the needs of the home.

The sunny seashores of the South see the visitors from all parts return every winter, desirous to escape snow and hoar-frost, and to find again the temperature and vegetation of spring. Her Majesty Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Empress of India, having come to spend a season at Biarritz with her retinue and a numerous household, deigned

to allow the begging Sisters of that town to receive the remains of food from the royal kitchen to feed their old people; and she inquired by the Princess Royal, who visited the home, if every day the Little Sisters of the Poor obtained these alms from the villa.

In England, the Duke of Norfolk placed himself in the first rank of the benefactors of the house at Sheffield by giving a well-situated plot of ground of convenient size to the Little Sisters of the Poor in full property, for them to place and develop there the home for poor old people, with the free co-operation of the inhabitants of that industrious and great city.

The material and religious situation of the Little Sisters was considerably improved in the great centres of England and Scotland; thus the establishment at Plymouth emerged from its long provisional state, and was developed with success on the heights which dominate the town and the port, whilst several foundations of recent date recalled the early efforts —for example, at Carlisle, where the Little Sisters of the Poor were the first religious to establish themselves in the place since the Reformation.

In Liverpool Bishop O'Reilly, in blessing the first stone of the establishment of Belmont Grove, made this declaration before the public: "The Little Sisters of the Poor have presented themselves here, as elsewhere, without introduction, without money, without other resources than Divine Providence; but they were full of faith and confidence, and

God blessed their efforts." On August 16, 1880, when they took possession with their old people along with a group of newcomers, the Bishop declared to them that one single establishment of that kind could not suffice for an agglomeration so extended and commercial as Liverpool; consequently it was necessary to begin a second home in the premises which they were about to leave. Seven old women consented to remain there to form the core; other Little Sisters arrived as reinforcements, and now old people filled the recently emptied house.

About the same epoch in 1881, the work was begun in Dublin, the capital of Ireland. They began in a hired house; two years later they bought in a suburb a field planted with cabbage, without fence or hedge, on the roadside. It was a question of building, but money was wanted. On December 6, 1883, an ecclesiastic presented himself; his violet band showed him to be a Canon, his old-fashioned gaiters and his large well-worn cloak showed his great age and small fortune. "I bring you," he said to the Little Sisters, "two parcels of old clothes. I do not know if they will be useful to you. Different things are inside—coats, linen, gloves, ties, etc." "Everything will certainly be of use to us," said the Little Sister, although the sight of the little parcel did not give them any desire to open it. The priest asked to see the Superior. "Tell her a priest wants to speak to her, but do not press her; I can wait very well until your prayers are finished" (for it was during

the office of Vespers). A short time after the good Mother and the Sister-Assistant arrived. He asked if she was really the Superior, then her name, and the name of the Sister-Assistant, and he repeated those names; he enumerated the objects which he brought, and he wished them to open the parcel which he unfolded piece by piece, saying: "I fear this will be of no use; if anything does not seem useful, tell me, and I shall take it away with me. Look at this waistcoat; how it is worn! you can do nothing with it." They always replied: "We will mend them; all will be useful." His manner seemed very strange. At last they stopped the questions by saying with cheerfulness: "No, you wiil carry away nothing;" and they closed the parcel. The unknown priest appeared satisfied.

He then put some questions as to the building-place price, and what they had in hand. They explained that the part to build would cost £5,000, and how they had in prospect some hundreds of pounds and Providence. He passes from one subject to another, questioned on the number of old people, conditions of admission, means of existence; he repeated the same questions two or there times. They could not imagine whence he came. At last they proposed he should visit the home. In the men's room he was recognized by one old man, who said: "That is the Reverend Canon P——." Amongst the women several called him by his name, gathered round him, and reminded him of their young days when he was already a priest at the cathedral. In the kitchen he appeared greatly

interested in the régime of the old people; he found them happy. After two hours had passed by, he went towards the door, after having renewed his questions concerning the building and the funds.

The following day, when they were serving the dinner for the old people, the Canon reappeared. He was better dressed. He asked by name for the good Mother and the Little Sister-Assistant. They both entered. He seemed quite happy, and asked them to repeat their names, and the information of the previous day. At last he said to them with a thoughtful look: "I will give you some money. Will you be satisfied if I give you £100?" "Oh, Father, it is Saint Joseph who sends you." "Well," said the venerable old man with emotion, "I will give you, wherewith to build your house, £5,000." Their eyes were full of tears. The two Little Sisters fell on their knees. "Thanks be to God!" The priest prostrated himself also, and with a loud voice cried out: "*Te Deum laudamus.*" . . . The three voices joined in reciting the hymn, which expressed so deeply the keen sentiments of the gratitude of the soul. Arrived at the words, "*In te domine speravi,*" the good old priest raised his eyes with an ineffable expression. He repeated three times that verse, and then said in English: "In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust, and I shall never be confounded."

He stood up and said, "You are happy to receive it, I to give it. This money is in the bank: will you come there?" The two Little Sisters took their mantles and with the good old Canon entered the

carriage which was waiting for him at the door. Not a word was spoken on the way, but what sentiments filled the soul! The carriage stopped. "My lawyer lives here." The Sisters were shown into the office. "Sir, these are the ladies to whom I want to transmit £5,000." Then he filled in the cheque in the name of the Superior and gave it to her. They went then to the bank, which was quite near; the lawyer prepared a receipt; in a few minutes all was arranged. "Not a word in the papers," said the good Canon. They returned to the house under the deep impression of this interposition of Providence, and all the Little Sisters of the Poor were moved to the depth of their souls.

At this period we find a number of facts which can be put together like pieces of mosaic so as to form a picture, which will illustrate the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Twenty years before the foundation of Rive-de-Gier was accomplished, an excellent family had desired to have a home for the old coal-heavers and workmen of the foundries and glass-works; but the difficulties of execution increasing, that family went to consult the Curé d'Ars, whose reputation for holiness was well established. The holy priest replied prophetically: "No, you will not have the Little Sisters of the Poor now. Begin, all the same: they will come later." Then, drawing out of his pocket a piece of five francs in silver, he gave it to them, saying: "Here is an alms for the time when the Little Sisters of the Poor will come." Twenty years passed by. At

last, on March 26, 1877, the Little Sisters arrived and took possession of the little establishment, which contained forty-one poor. The piece of five francs had been religiously preserved. As one can imagine, everything was not according to the simple customs of the congregation, especially the chapel with its stained-glass windows, its marble and decorated objects; but the donors, placing the traditions of the Little Sisters above their particular ideas, arranged a wooden altar without delay, brass communion-rails, and plain windows. When we see people of the world suppressing all their objections, and imposing upon themselves onerous changes in order to protect the poverty and simplicity of the Little Sisters of the Poor, how could the latter do less or allow their traditions to be altered?

The brother alms-gatherer of the Capuchin Fathers was the promoter of the foundation at Carcassonne, and no doubt he considered the two works related in Saint Francis. He succeeded in collecting together 13,000 francs, gaining over to the scheme Mgr. Billard, who consented to be the depositary of the sum, and to obtain civil authorization. On November 14, 1879, the Little Sisters arrived at Carcassonne, and Brother Théotime was waiting for them at the house while preparing the meal. This was not the usual scarcity; the good Brother, authorized by his Superiors, had given himself much trouble. There were eighteen iron beds with mattresses filled with straw, twelve new mattresses, thirty-six grey woollen blankets, eighteen pairs of sheets, dusters, napkins, and two tablecloths; there

were two large tables with twelve drawers each, eighty new large chairs, two small tables, a cupboard, some utensils, some dishes, a quantity of coal and potatoes, a kitchen stove; the chapel was prepared with a simple altar in new wood, the statues of the holy protectors, and six benches. On November 21 a Vicar-General of the diocese came to bless the humble chapel and to celebrate there the first Mass; Brother Théotime had the joy of serving his Mass.

The same year at Auch: "When they were still in the temporary chapel, a seminarist served the Mass of the poor for a director of the great seminary. During Mass he felt quite moved in his soul through the prayers, singing, and sweet piety of the Little Sisters who presented themselves for Communion, and the poor old people who joined in, as well as they could, in their acts of devotion. 'I should like,' said he in going out, 'to be associated some day with the religious service of this house.'" Having become voluntary chaplain to the home, while doing his work at the seminary and at the Archbishop's house, he made more than one appeal in the *Semaine Religieuse* of the diocese to help the enterprise. A gallery having been erected in the first floor of the home, he hastened to make this first amelioration in the dwelling of the infirm known to his readers in these compassionate terms: "These poor people who have not gone out for several years have during this winter been wheeled in their arm-chairs to the gallery, and there they enjoy the least ray of sun sent by the good God to their benumbed limbs.

What a joy for the poor infirm to be placed in the open air, to inhale the first breezes of the spring, to see the country and the town, the blue sky and the mountains, to watch those who pass in the garden, and address them with a word or a smile. It is like new life for these poor people, formerly exiled in the infirmaries."

Then it was the turn of the chapel. "There is," he wrote, "at the house of the Little Sisters of the Poor, on the first floor, a special category of old people—the infirm. These are the dearest children of the family. The whitest beds and the softest pillow-cases are conspicuous in their dormitory. The best bits of the collection are for them, the first strawberries in the garden—all the nicest things. But still, our poor folks are very much to be pitied. They do not enjoy any of the ceremonies at the chapel. For some time past they have been so troubled about it that they have put their great protector, Saint Joseph, to build a chapel with a gallery, so that their invalid chairs could be wheeled into it. In the infirmary of the men and the women the statue of Saint Joseph has its pedestal encumbered with these two significant ornaments, until a new order comes, a stone and a goblet full of sand. Above this inscription is found: 'Good Saint Joseph, give us, if you please, a chapel, in order that we may have Mass on Sunday.'" The chapel has been made, as everything is done by the Little Sisters, with offerings of various degrees and with patient waiting.

One evening in November, 1885, a Vicar-General

of Paris, who in 1871 had been one of the hostages of the Commune at the Roquette, presented himself at the establishment in the avenue of Breteuil. "My Little Sisters, I have just made my retreat, and I have taken the resolution to be your chaplain. I come to offer myself: will you have me?" He loved this work, which reminded him of the Hôtels-Dieu of the Middle Ages, where religion placed its sweetness and balm in all wounds, physical and moral, without the Sisters being hindered by irreligious or materialistic administrations, as it happens sometimes in the large hospitals under pretext of neutrality. Liberty for that which is good, is it not supremely desirable, and does it not form part of the conscience of Christian nations?

A true friendship was quickly established between a similar chaplain and his little parish. There he did everything for everybody: the Vicar-General became Father Little (his name "Petit" means "Little"), as he loved to hear himself called. Cardinal Guibert, who favoured this work of sacerdotal zeal, having just died, the Rev. Petit arranged that the old people who had come from the six houses in Paris to be present at the funeral, entered the court of honour by the side of deputies and Senators, and then followed the hearse. The crowd, seeing them pass, impressed with their worthy and honest appearance, asked: "Who are those fine old people?" People heard the superintendent of the funeral procession say: "Let the old people of the Little Sisters of the Poor pass; it is the adopted family of the Cardinal!" The Vicar-General died

in his turn, and Cardinal Richard wrote to the clergy of the diocese: "There is a work which in the last years of his life seems to have been the object of his predilection, that of the Little Sisters of the Poor. He watched with a tender solicitude over all their cares; it was good to see him in the midst of old people; his sacerdotal charity overflowed towards them. He loved them and was loved by them. Every morning he celebrated Holy Mass there; he heard the confessions of the old people. This was his sweetest and last rest."

It was the same at Rennes, where the Rev. Peter Roche, the model of chaplains for aged poor by his lively faith, compassionate kindness, and life, entirely consecrated himself to this humble and consoling ministry. No doubt he had generally to do with simple old people who had led a peaceful life and who had a foundation of religion easy to cultivate; there were even a good number of these poor people who showed their devotion by frequently approaching the Sacraments and living united to God. But it is not always thus, and several among the 300 old people who inhabit the home have passed an existence more or less cosmopolitan. Besides, there are troubles which are only told to the priest, and which the Sisters themselves are powerless to relieve; they are the crises of the soul and of conscience which, for a long time restrained or trodden down, end by breaking forth, and which operate a moral transformation. He excelled in calling them forth. One day, when his ministry had called him to the infirmary of the men to a

dying man, another old man who had travelled the world over and was gloomily ending his days suddenly cried out to him: "I want to die like a dog!" The good priest stopped, and replied firmly and gently: "No one dies like that here. I will make it my business to restore to you the honour of which you want to deprive yourself, and I hope that you will die like a Christian." Strangely enough, these words effected a reconciliation on the spot between the old man and the priest, who exchanged some good words and a shake of the hand. As soon as he had recovered, he came down from the infirmary and went himself to the priest at the presbytery; he confided his life to him, and the chaplain joyfully placed the old man on the way to heaven.

On July 3, 1889, Rev. Ernest Lelièvre terminated his providential mission in favour of the old people, and died the death of the righteous at La Tour Saint-Joseph after a devoted and indefatigable ministry in the service of the Little Sisters of the Poor. His works related in the course of this history are his eulogy and his true monument. The hospitaller family counted about thirty houses when he associated himself to it; it counted 260 establishments when he died. He had been the witness and one of the principal instruments of this marvel.*

* The Rev. Lelièvre and the Rev. Roche, who died on May 16, 1893, united in life and in death, repose side by side in the cemetery of La Tour Saint-Joseph.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE CONGREGATION

Change in the method of government—Plurality of novitiates —Provincial establishments—Mission of auxiliary priests terminated—General Chapter—The Directory.

THE hospitaller family, constituted by the association of some workwomen with the help of a young priest at Saint-Servan, raised to the dignity of a congregation through the approbation of the Bishop of Rennes and of the Holy Apostolic See, received with sympathy by the people as an invention in the domain of charity and a social work, had sown the world with homes for the aged poor. It counted 260 of them, and had existed for half a century, when the Holy Apostolic See, the organ of providential designs, judged the time opportune to admit the hospitaller congregation to the régime of the common law, by assimilating its government in everything to that of the great religious congregations.

It has been seen in the course of this history that the hospitaller work of the Little Sisters of the Poor had been recognized and approved by the civil governments and by the Church as a congregation with a Mother Superior-General and having its autonomy. However, considering the important part which he had taken in its foundation and developments, the Rev. Le Pailleur had been main-

tained as promoter of the institute at the good pleasure of the Holy See. On May 11, 1890, his functions came to an end, either on account of the general measure which attached all authority to the Mother-General and her council, or on account of his great age of seventy-eight years. "I consider as terminated," he wrote on the date of June 11, "the work which God had given me to accomplish, and I have the assurance of doing His will in devoting what it shall please Him to grant me of life, to preparing myself in retreat and in prayer for my death and for eternity." Five years later, on December 20, 1895, he died in Rome, the chosen place of his retreat, in a religious community consecrated to the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, having realized the programme traced in the preceding lines, after having appointed as testamentary executor his friend and counsel, Mr. Dorange, lawyer at Rennes, and having been fortified with the Sacraments of the Church. He reposes in the Campo Santo, in the vault of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Up to this time the congregation had had one single house for novices, annexed to the mother-house at La Tour Saint-Joseph in France. On August 26, 1891, the establishment of several houses for novices was decreed in order to favour vocations, diminish journeys, and give a more personal formation to the novices. Three new houses for novices for the complete training of subjects were thus established in Italy, Belgium, and Spain. After the

preparatory period they were definitely placed: the first at Marino, near Rome, in May 1893; the second in Antwerp in July, 1893; the third in Madrid in February, 1897. Besides, a fifth novitiate had also been commenced at Brooklyn in the United States in October, 1892. This organization, which was of the greatest importance for the future of the congregation, took several years to instal, but was conducted successfully. The formation is the same there; the type of the Little Sisters of the Poor has been preserved, and the young Sisters from these novitiates easily amalgamate with those previously established in the different houses for hospitaller Sisters.

The division of the society into "Provinces" followed the establishment of the various novitiates. Until this time the prodigious movement of foundations in the five parts of the world, and the necessity of constant removal, had absorbed the living forces of the congregation; at last the time had come to group the houses into a certain number of provinces, to fix the provincial government, and assure the regular visitation of these houses. Consequently it was necessary to settle the hierarchy of authorities, their mode of election, and their constitutional attributes in all degrees. The organization, put to trial in 1894, ended definitely in 1898, from which time it takes its place in the constitutions.

From the results obtained, a guarantee of religious stability was recognized in these arrangements, and all idea of experiments progressively made room for stability. Is the history of the constitutions of the

Little Sisters of the Poor, beginning from Saint-Servan and from Rennes, anything but a continuation of providential developments and so many stages of the blessing of Heaven?

Two personages—Cardinal Place, Archbishop of Rennes, assisted by his Vicar-General, Rev. Delafosse, from 1890 to 1892, and the Rev. Father Desurmont, Redemptorist, from 1892, to 1896—successively had the direction of these important measures as Apostolic delegates. This was a temporary mission. Some time before his death, Cardinal Place wrote: "The Institution of the Little Sisters of the Poor, so marvellously blessed by God, of whom it is visibly the work, is the honour of the Church and of the Diocese of Rennes. Since my arrival at Rennes, the Little Sisters have been, and have not since then ceased to be, one of the dearest and most constant objects of my interest and my solicitude. I have followed my own bent and fulfilled my duty in striving to give them, especially after the Rev. Le Pailleur left, all the marks of devotedness in my power." Presiding on March 8, 1893, in the principal courtyard of the novitiate at La Tour Saint-Joseph, at the inauguration of a statue of the Sacred Heart, a gift of his most eminent predecessor, the Rev. Father Desurmont explained the programme of his apostolate. We quote from his address:

"Why do we solemnly consecrate you and your institution to the Heart of Jesus? Because you must have Divine love for the life of your life. Now, the

Heart of Jesus is the sanctuary and the source of this holy charity.

"Let us remark that all human societies have a share of love which is proper to them. Families have the mutual affection between parents and children; native countries have the ordinary love for all fellow-countrymen. All these kinds of love are so many treasures. But there is a love which surpasses all: it is Divine love, and that love is called charity.

"All human souls, all human lawful associations, are made to love God. But there are privileged creatures who are specially called to this celestial virtue. These are the religious. Where is the place of the Little Sisters in this kingdom of charity? One can say, without any exaggeration, the Little Sister is, by her position and vocation, a privileged daughter of Divine charity. Enter the abode of the Little Sisters, in that order so far from nature; it appears to you to be a sacrifice which could have no other principle than pure love for God and His creatures. Thus the wish to live and to die in this holy love has been, as it were, the true spiritual dowry which you have brought to religion. There, my Sisters, there is your vocation such as God has made it, and such as you feel it in your souls when you sound their depths, because within the depths of your souls one word re-echoes: God! God for me, and for my poor! But if this word makes heaven rejoice, where all is charity, it makes hell tremble, where all is hatred. On one side, the Holy Spirit has preserved for you an in-

destructible attraction for pure Divine love; but on the other hand, the genius of evil will ever strive to destroy in you true love or to corrupt it.

"What if this kind of devotion to the Sacred Heart expands among you—what will the result be for the Little Family, for your old people, and for yourselves? The result will be that our Lord, profoundly touched, will more and more decide to choose you as the objects of His great mercy; that, thanks to the spirit of charity which will increase in your souls, those of your old people will be, by the very fact, more nourished by the good God; that the number of holy daughters, women, and virtuous religious will increase among you; that Divine Providence will take all your interests more and more in hand, spiritual above all; that at last (and this is the essential), God and Jesus Christ, His Son, will be contented in the midst of you as well as His Holy Mother, and when God is pleased with us we can desire nothing more."*

Two Sisters from "the small beginnings" were at the head of the congregation, Marie and Eulalie Jamet; the first as Superior-General, the second as first Assistant-General. Both ended their lives in

* The *Semaine Religeuse* at Rennes has thus mentioned his death: "The Redemptorist Fathers have just had the grief to lose their Superior-Provincial, the Very Rev. Father Desurmont. During long years he occupied important offices in the institution, and was honoured with the special confidence of the Holy See. He preached numerous ecclesiastical retreats with a success to which the clergy has rendered unanimous homage. He died at Thiery-en-Valois, on July 23, 1898, in his seventieth year."

directing the Little Sisters in providential ways, under the direction of the holy Church. They both died in the mother-house during the year 1893 in deep sentiments of religion, the good Mother Marie de la Conception on January 20, at the age of sixty-eight, the good Mother Marie Augustine de la Compassion on September 19, at the age of seventy-three. They rejoined their companions of the early days in the humble and peaceful little cemetery of La Tour Saint-Joseph; the five first Little Sisters of the Poor, foundresses in common of the hospitaller work, repose there in the same line, leaving to those who follow beautiful examples of humility, devotedness, moral force and absolute faith in Providence.

On account of the important part which she had taken in the foundation and development of the charitable institutions, the good Mother Marie Augustine de la Compassion had been Superior of the congregation for fifty years (1843-1893). The good Mother Augustine de St. André succeeded her with the title of Vicar-General (1893-1899), and assisted with all her power the action of the Holy Apostolic See to maintain the institution in its hospitaller way and to complete its legislation. In her person, the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences of Paris awarded to the Little Sisters of the Poor on March 5, 1898, the prize Audiffred of the value of 15,000 francs, marking by this official act the interest which France has not ceased to bear towards the work for the aged poor. On February 5, 1899, Pope Leo XIII gave an audience to the good Mother Augustine de Saint André to bless the congregation and to express in a very

fatherly manner his satisfaction that the revision of the constitutions (May 6, 1898) was an accomplished fact, on the basis of the common law.

In the course of this history it has been seen that the hospitaller association had had several auxiliary priests, as much for the benefit of the poor as for that of the Sisters. In putting an end to their mission the Holy See was pleased to render this testimony: "The few secular priests who have agreed voluntarily to lend their assistance to your congregation in its period of formation, with the double assent of their diocesan Ordinary and of that of the diocese where their ministry was exercised, have given proof of a devotedness above all praise, so generous was it, so constant, so disinterested, so clear-sighted, and so conformable to the solid maxims of the religious life. Now that the said congregation through Divine mercy has happily emerged from its first period, and has its complete organization, and received a direction from the Holy See as paternal as attentive, these worthy priests have full liberty to resume in their respective dioceses such ministries as their Ordinary shall judge it to be his duty to confide to them, as better proportioned to their forces, experience, and aptitude.—ROME, *August* 19, 1896."

On September 8, 1899, the Chapter-General of the congregation—which has for object: (1) the election of the Superior-General, of the six Mothers-Assistant, and of the Mothers-Provincial; (2) the regulation of important affairs of the congregation—was held

at La Tour Saint-Joseph, Mother-House of the institute, under the presidency of His Eminence Cardinal Labouré,* Archbishop of Rennes, assisted by the Very Rev. Durusselle, his Vicar-General, in the name of the Holy Apostolic See.

In the Chapter of the Order the following assisted and voted: (1) the Mothers-Assistant, whose office was just expiring; (2) the Mothers-Provincial, also retiring from office; (3) a Sister delegated from each province and elected by the good Mothers of that province. The convocations and the preparatory prayers being terminated, the most eminent President opened the Chapter and exhorted the "Capitulars" to elect a Superior-General endowed with prudence and firmness, having the fear of God, and capable of rendering service to the congregation. The Superior-General, according to the constitutions, is endowed with the principal authority to govern and administer the congregation conformably to the rule and the constitutions of the Order. The duration of her charge is six years.

The result of the votes being ascertained, Sister

* Previously being Bishop of Le Mans, Mgr. Labouré had sent in 1886 this benevolent attestation to Rome. "The Little Sisters of the Poor were established at Le Mans in 1854, and since that time they have been the edification of the clergy and faithful of the town and of the diocese by their excellent religious spirit, and by the admirable devotedness which they have shown in the relief of the poor old people received in their homes. These old people of both sexes have found by these Sisters, not only material and corporal assistance, but what is more precious, the benefit of a Christian life and almost always a holy death."

Thérèse de la Conception was declared elected Superior-General. She was re-elected at the next Chapter held at La Tour Saint-Joseph, August, 1905.

The Chapter proceeded afterwards to the choice of six Assistants-General. The one who is elected first has the title of First Assistant, and performs the functions of Vicar-General and takes the place of the Superior when the latter is absent; the Second Assistant is Vicar-Local of the good Mother-General, and in this quality has the charge of the mother-house; the third has the attributes of General Stewardess; the three others are employed either as secretaries or for the common good. The six good Mothers-Assistant form the Council-General of the congregation, under the presidency of the Superior of the institute.

The central government being thus constituted, and the names having been proclaimed, they proceeded to the election of the good Mothers-Provincial. The provinces were eighteen in number, namely—In France, Paris, Marseilles, Lyons, Bordeaux, Lille, Rennes; in Belgium, Brussels; in Italy; Rome; in Spain, Madrid, Barcelona, Seville; in the British Empire, London, Dublin; in North America, Brooklyn (New York), Chicago; in South America, Valparaiso; in Asia, Colombo; in Oceania, Sydney.

The elections having been ratified by the ecclesiastical authority, the good Mothers-Assistant and Provincials having been formally voted in the Chapter proceeded to the deliberations which con-

cern the greater affairs of the institute. The hospitaller congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor, every six years, thus obtains a regular government; it is directly connected with the Holy See by a Cardinal-Protector, designated by the Sovereign Pontiff.

We have seen in the course of this history how the Directory was being drawn up. The fruit of the experience of half a century, proved under all climates and amongst all people, codified and written out by the Superiors according to the principles of religious and hospitaller life, examined and encouraged by the representatives of the Holy Apostolic See as the indispensable complement of the constitutions, was adopted and put into practice in the year 1901, thanks to the practical zeal of the good Mother-General, Thérèse de la Conception, whose name will remain in the history of the Little Sisters of the Poor attached to this important measure. The Directory, at the same time that it fixes the tradition and decides various details, is an efficacious means of maintaining unity of action and conformity of customs between the Little Sisters of all houses of the congregation. In this respect it is an important work, and one which does honour to the Council-General of the institute.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE TWO AMERICAS

In the United States, in Canada, Chili, and Colombia—The Congress at Washington, and old negroes—The President of the Chilian Republic—The Municipal Council of Bogota—The aged and their benefactors.

We must now leave Europe and make the tour of the world. In North and in South America we find: another house at Brooklyn, Germantown, in 1880; Providence, second house at New York, in 1881; second house at Cincinnati, Evansville, Kansas City, second house at Chicago, second house at New Orleans, in 1882; Saint Paul in 1883; Grand Rapids in 1884; Toledo and Alleghany in 1890; third house at Chicago in 1890; second house at Saint Louis, San Francisco, Mobile, New Haven, Patterson, in 1901; second house at Philadelphia, novitiate at Queens, in 1902; Wilmington, third house at New York, Nashville, in 1903; Los Angeles, in 1905: all in the United States. Montreal, in Canada, in 1887; Valparaiso in 1885; Santiago, in Chili, in 1894; Concepcion in 1903; a second house in Santiago in 1905; Bogota, in 1899; in Colombia.

It is a characteristic of stories of travel to make much of what is new and picturesque, and to leave the rest in shadow. The hospitaller family, on landing in the United States, had followed the usual

path of emigration; now it pushes its colonies towards the North, the South, and the Far West, where new cities were founded and the flood of emigration turned. In their homes could be found some of the aged who related what the country was in former days. Thus at Evansville in 1882, when the Sisters came and opened an asylum in a house placed at their disposal by the widow (who was herself an emigrant) of a former secretary of a King of England, a poor old fellow, eighty-eight years of age, knocked at the door and begged for admission. His history is contained in a few words: An emigrant from Europe, he had wandered about, and had advanced as far as the Ohio. He had been one of the first to settle in that region, where he had hewn from the forest a fine domain for himself, and in time had formed a fertile farm. All went well, the farm and the family alike were prospering, when the cholera invaded the country, and took from him in a single day his wife and four sons. So great was his misery, that he himself was forced to dig the grave and bury his dead on his own property. The rest was but a history of ruin and of a daily struggle for an existence, which he ended in the home, without having kept a single halfpenny.

Saunderson had set out from Cleveland on the banks of Lake Erie in 1820. He was the first white man who settled on Lake Michigan, on the spot where the important town of Milwaukee now stands. He was thus its pioneer and first founder. Seized with the gold-fever in 1849, he set out for California. He made, lost, and remade a fortune, as it frequently

happens in that country. He returned, ruined, when eighty years of age to Milwaukee, hoping there to find the means to end his troubled life in peace. But he was no longer known; besides, he was poor and old, and that drives friends away. All that he found was sufficient influence to obtain admission to the home of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Born at the beginning of the century, Vaillancourt had accompanied Simpson, the Governor of Quebec, in 1826, as a guide. On his return from a long exploring journey in the Far West, the young and daring Canadian stopped with a tribe of savages at the sources of the Mississippi. He obtained from them, in exchange for a few piastres and a few jugs of spirits, a large extent of land, on which now stand the towns of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, and for some time he tried to improve his land. Robbed one day, while he was drunk, of all that he possessed, he was tied to a raft, and cast into the current of the great river. Landing on a desert shore, he found his way to Saint Louis. From thence, after many adventures, he arrived in Algeria with the French soldiers at the time of the conquest. We find him in 1848 at Paris, firing from the barricades. He came back to Canada, and returned to Saint Paul to find his rights there lapsed, and part of the land covered with houses. In his vexation, he traversed the world in search of fresh adventures. About 1887, having again returned to Saint Paul, broken down with misfortune, old, and indigent, he begged refuge from the Little Sisters of the Poor, whose establishment dominates the rich

valley of the Mississippi. There, seated paralyzed in his arm-chair, he views what was formerly his unstable property, and without regret for his lost possessions, he says: "After all, God has been good to me, for He has preserved me through so many adventures in order to bring me to finish my days in peace in the place where I began my career, and in order that I may hope for more lasting possessions."

At New Orleans there was an old man 102 years of age, whose career was very extraordinary. Born at sea under the English flag, of a German family, in 1776, he had lost his parents without having known them. He was brought up on the sea, and passed the greater part of his life upon it. At the age of eighteen, the ship which had seen his birth and growth was wrecked, and all was lost. He was saved upon a hen-coop. Having reached the shore, he said to himself: "Now they shall no longer call me 'cabin-boy'" (for he had no name); "since this coop has been my saviour, I will take its name Coop, with James for my first name." He knew no more of God, than he did of his parents. Becoming a centenarian, he bethought himself of the home for the aged. When he presented himself at the asylum, he felt an indescribable attraction towards it, and great was his grief when they replied to him that at present there was no room for him. "Well," said James Coop, "the sea saw my birth—the river shall receive me when I can no longer get bread." The good Mother said to him: "My friend, you must respect the white hair which God has given you."

These words impressed him; but when she continued: "You tell me that you have never known your mother. Be at peace; henceforth I will be your mother, and you shall learn to know the good God." At these words he said to the Sister: "Never has a tear moistened my eyelids, and now I cannot keep them back." When he had entered the asylum, he collected the scattered memories of his long existence, and made up his mind to take a great step. He declared that the religion of the Little Sisters was the true religion, and obtained instruction. Soon he said: "I am old; I may die; and I feel that I have not Divine grace." Then the chaplain hesitated no longer, but baptized him at his earnest desire.

These extraordinary stories of some of the old men may be completed by stories as extraordinary of some of the benefactors. Thus, whilst a legacy from Mr. Drexel paid the debts of the house at Philadelphia-Germantown, Mr. John Reitz, a German by origin, built the house at Evansville, and Mr. Patrick Branigan, an Irishman, erected the establishment at Providence. Andrew Smith, of New Haven, left 40,000 dollars to open a home for the aged, and the Little Sisters of the Poor reached that town on the anniversary of his death, just in time to assist at the Mass celebrated for the repose of his soul. Fifty thousand dollars left by Rev. Hugh Lane enabled the Little Sisters to purchase a piece of ground for their second house in Philadelphia. At Chicago, the development of the work followed the prodigious development of the city, and three houses founded successively were filled

with poor old people, who live in them upon voluntary contributions. A rich man, Mr. Ryerson, died, leaving an income to several benevolent institutions, notably 1,200 dollars a year to each of the two first houses of the Little Sisters of the Poor. When this was announced to them they went to the executors of the will, and refused to receive it, at which the executors were greatly astonished. Now the legacy was already registered, and the Sisters were endowed without knowing it. It was therefore necessary for them to make a legal Act of renunciation, which is dated November 19, 1888, and this clause is registered: "Whereas the Rules and Constitutions of the Little Sisters of the Poor absolutely forbid the Corporation to have a perpetual revenue of any kind. . . ." Thus the Little Sisters in America, as in Europe, remained true to themselves, and preserved the distinctive characteristic of their work, both in their private life and in their public deeds.

The Congress of the United States took interest in the enterprise as concerning the aged negroes. We know that the coloured population is mixed with the white in several States of the Union, and that either from old-time prejudices or for valid reasons the whites are not willing to live in common with the blacks in the public establishments of beneficence. Nevertheless, the Little Sisters of the Poor could not be uninterested in the aged blacks. They began in some towns to try an arrangement which permitted them, while keeping the whites and the blacks separate, to unite under the same roof of

charity their twofold indigence and their common infirmities. In 1881 they began the work at Washington, consequently under the eyes of the representatives of the nation, who approved of the idea and even, in order to raise the negroes' part of the building, passed a vote for a grant of money. The grant was thus worded in the Acts of Congress: "1884.—For the construction of an addition to the building known as being the Home of the Little Sisters of the Poor in the city of Washington, District of Columbia, 25,000 dollars. The half of the said sum to be paid from the Treasury of the United States, and the other half from the revenue of the district of Columbia."

Hateful slavery had disappeared, but all the older negroes had undergone it before the liberation; it was a time of transition. At Evansville the Sisters had taken care of an old negro, ninety years of age, for four years. He had been a slave for sixty years under a cruel and godless master, so that the slave had learned nothing except to work and to receive blows. After his liberation he still retained sentiments of hatred against his detestable master, and could not make up his mind to receive instruction in order to become a Christian. Since he had been at the home he went to the chapel, was attentive to the prayers, and listened with pleasure to the sermon. "I could stay whole days listening to that priest," said he, "if all that he explains is true. I should much like to go where he says we shall all go, if we do what he tells us to do." Every day one of his companions read to him, and explained as well as he

could, by talking to him, the truths and the duties of religion. The negro fell ill and constantly asked for baptism. They allowed him to continue asking for some time, in order to make sure of his constancy. At last this grace was granted to him. Some time after the old slave died, saying: "I forgive those who have ill-treated me."

In another house an old man of colour was received who had a fearfully diseased leg; the skin of the foot was raised by the maggots which swarmed in it. A Sister dressed the wound of this man, and did her utmost to soften his savage temper. But the old man had been brought up and lived amidst the superstitions of his race, in which "fetiches" play a great part, and one day, urged by pain and by grace, he exclaimed: "You do not know me. I have given myself to the devil; I have sold my soul to him." The news spread in the house, and impressed all the old people in the halls and infirmaries. They set themselves to pray for the soul of the poor wretch, and no doubt obtained for him deliverance from his second slavery, for he died changed and penitent.

At Louisville a widow lady, having come to pay a visit in memory of her husband, who had left a legacy to the establishment, the old people were presented to her. In the infirmary for black women what did she see? One of her old slaves, who had been her nurse, and whom she believed to be dead. She went to the poor old soul, took her in her arms, and shedding tears, said: "Mamé, Mamé, is it possible that you are here?" And the old negress

said: "O Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast given me the happiness of once more seeing my young mistress."

With its departments for men and for women, for whites and for blacks, the hospitaller home had its own peculiarities. This charity, which had no respect for social conditions, which gave to the aged poor without distinction of race or nationality, or even religion, and which begged alms from all the world, and made all this serve for the development of a work eminently humanitarian, did not fail to make an impression upon the mind of the public. In spite of prejudices the Catholic work was accepted, and gained the sympathy of the public. Thus, to serve the poor is to serve humanity.

Cardinal Gibbons bore this testimony in 1886: "The extension, so rapid and so extraordinary, of this institution, which has hardly half a century of existence, and still more the spirit of the Gospel which inspires it, which fills the heart and sustains the self-devotion of its members, are in my eyes evident signs of the approval of God. It is from the very heart of God, who is Himself charity, that the Little Sisters draw this practical, tender, and heroic love for the poor, which touches and edifies the cities of Baltimore and Washington in my diocese. I consider that America is happy to have thus before its eyes the example of Catholic charity, always full of life and persuasiveness. Oh, how powerful within the heart of our Protestant countrymen is this living service of the Little Sisters of the

Poor! What good it does to those who give! Its principal charm is its simplicity. This life of service to God's poor fails, in the case of the Sisters, to recall all that is implied therein of repugnance, sacrifice, of self-effacement, and all this because love has actually conquered all these."

It will not be without use to cite the testimony of a Protestant, a member of the Town Council. It was at Richmond in 1890, after a dinner given to the old people of the asylum by many benefactors and others who were invited. "I have not come to make a speech," said this gentleman, "but I cannot forbear giving my reflections. I have known the Little Sisters of the Poor ever since they came into the town. The first time they came to my shop to ask for charity for their poor, I told them that I could not give them much. The Sister answered me: 'The little helps us, sir, and we shall be very grateful to you.' Indeed, what has struck me is that every time the Sisters come to me, whether I give them little or much, they thank me with the same good countenance. Why I love their work, is because I recognize in it true charity. They take care of Protestants as well as of Catholics. Whenever I can render you a service, dear Sisters, do not hesitate to come to me."

Let us be present at the arrival of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Canada. A Redemptorist, the parish priest of Saint Ann's at Montreal, wrote to his Bishop: "My lord, I have many poor in my parish. These poor are excluded from the hospice of Saint Patrick, where they have always

been admitted gratuitously. Now, to pay twenty shillings a head per month is impossible for me. To construct a new hospice, to maintain the nuns who would serve it, and to feed the poor besides, is a second impossibility for me. I must, theerfore, abandon these poor entirely, or be allowed to call the Little Sisters to my aid." The Archbishop desired to know the conditions, and began to discuss them with a priest delegated by the congregation. After successful negotiations, the Little Sisters of the Poor formed the foundation at Montreal on September 8, 1887, the date of their entrance into Canada. In 1893 the Archbishop blessed the chapel, and already 120 old people occupied a building erected on a very convenient piece of land until the establishment should be completed so as to shelter 230 aged poor.

Now let us transport ourselves to South America, to Chili, and quit the English language for Spanish. The hospitaller colony arrives from Europe, disembarks at the principal port of the Pacific, a town of 100,000 inhabitants, in order there to apply its system of aid. The ladies of Valparaiso receive the new Sisters with demonstrations of joy, for it is they who have paid the rent of the house of foundation for three years, and who have furnished it with what is necessary; and it is one of them, Doña Juana Ross de Edwards, who has paid the passage of the little foundresses. Having arrived on September 6, 1885, the Little Sisters receive on the 14th their first aged poor.

A few months later the asylum counted forty-five

old people—some white, of Spanish extraction, others of darker colour, either Indians or half-castes. Dolorcita was an Indian of rather savage temper; she passed her time in the garden, occupied with the plants, of which she knew all the qualities. A Chinese woman with her dolls came to join her, and gravely said that she was five years old, while she was really seventy. She became the joy of the house. From the beginning love reigns amongst the women, they call each other only by the sweet name of "Sister"; when a new arrival comes each one makes a festival of it, and they say to each other, "A new sister is coming—let us make her welcome."

Three men entered the home—a Frenchman, an Irishman, and a negro. They outvied each other in working. The Irishman, an old sailor, took to the washing, and took the negro for his companion; together they wrung out the clothes, together they subdued their tempers, which were rather undisciplined, and together they got the better of their old habit of drinking too much. The Frenchman gave himself up to gardening, and put all his cleverness into it: "People must be made to perceive that it is a Frenchman who keeps it."

This pastoral condition lasted but one season. Aged natives arrived in increasing numbers, and a vast hospice was not long in being formed. Mrs. Edwards was the benefactress of the establishment by the gift of adjacent land and important constructions. She ceded her rights by a deed dated March 5, 1889. The Rev. Casanova, who had made with her

the request for the foundation, had become Archbishop of Santiago. He wished himself to bless the house and the chapel, which he did on August 21, 1890, in the presence of several thousands of people. That they were very sympathetic can be judged from the following:

In Chili in 1891, civil war deluged the country with blood. At last the insurgents were defeated. The eight days which preceded the victory were very painful, on account of the anxiety and general consternation which prevailed at Valparaiso. There was no communication by rail, boat, or post; horses and cattle were seized; the shops were shut; for two days bread and meat were lacking. But Providence could find the way to bring food to the asylum, for the bakers admitted the Sisters by the back doors and filled their sacks; there was no bread to sell, but there was some to give away, and the poor old people were not left without it. The night which followed the battle was terrible; it was a night of pillage, fire, and murder, but two soldiers on horseback (it is not known by whom they were posted) guarded the home from nine o'clock in the evening till six o'clock in the morning, and that for fifteen days. Twenty wounded men, picked up on the field of battle in a pitiable condition, were confided to the Sisters; they rendered this service to the cause of humanity and of religion.

The year following, on March 7, 1892, Georges Mondt, the President of the Republic, accompanied by the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Public Works, paid a visit to the home. They were

cheered by the men and women, and the President, passing down the ranks, shook hands with all of them with the greatest benevolence. The authorities visited the establishment in detail: the chapel, the infirmaries, the dormitories, the linen-room, the kitchen, the yard, and comparing this kind of assistance with that of the public administrations, saw in it quite another kind of charity in action. The President, before leaving, expressed his desire that a similar establishment for old people might be founded at Santiago, the capital of Chili.

A year later, in March, 1894, the Little Sisters opened the asylum at Santiago, and were received with favour by the inhabitants. After a time of trial and temporary arrangements, they were in a condition to carry out the definite plan of a house of the Little Sisters. Who was it that brought 700 pesos just at the time the resources were exhausted? It was a lady who would not give her name. She reappeared, entered the parlour, and deposited 5,000 pesos at the feet of the statue of Saint Joseph with these words: "For the new house." She returned a third and a fourth time, each time depositing a rich offering, and simply saying, "Saint Joseph is my patron, he has sent me." On March 19, 1899, Mgr. Casanova blessed the new home for the aged, and recapitulating what had been done under his eyes at Chili and elsewhere, he spoke of the permanent miracle of Providence.

The Chilian Government had already granted the privilege of legal acknowledgement, registered as follows:

" Santiago,
" *April* 27, 1897.

" *Republic of Chili.*
" *Foreign Affairs.*

" His Excellency decrees this day, No. 435 :

" Regarding the Petition, No. 904, dated the 23rd of this month, of the most illustrious and most reverend Archbishop of Santiago :

" It is decreed :

" That the establishment in Chili of the Religious Congregation, entitled ' Little Sisters of the Poor,' is authorized.

" Let it be noted, communicated, published, and inserted in the Bulletin of the Laws and Decrees of the Government.

" (Signed) Errazurig."

In 1903 the Little Sisters were called to the town of Concepcion by Mgr. Placiolo Labarca, who procured them a house and repaired it at his own expense.

Mrs. Dolores Olaenta, who had so generously contributed by her donations to the erection of the first home in Santiago, granted them on February 9, 1905, a piece of ground and a house to establish a second home in that city.

During the course of the summer of 1899, ten of the Little Sisters of the Poor went up the river Magdalena, in Colombia; then, escorted by the President of the conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul from the capital, they climbed the Andes and arrived at Santa

Fé de Bogota, where a numerous assembly of ladies and gentlemen awaited them at the railway terminus. The demonstration ended, they traversed the town. "We thought that we had arrived at our destination, and had but to alight to be at our house, but what a surprise! We were in front of a church, through the large open doors we saw an altar splendidly illuminated; the organ sounded joyously. Deeply touched we were conducted to the choir, where seats had been prepared for us. The vicar, vested with his very beautiful cope, intoned a *Te Deum*, which was superbly chanted before the Blessed Sacrament. I think we all wept." The Municipal Council of the capital had granted, for a term of thirty years, a low but tolerably large house, together with three hectares of land surrounding it, for the founding of a home for the old people. It was opened in October. The women's quarters received an old lady of ninety-five, and the men's quarter boasted of an old man, a hundred and five years of age.

All the merit of the Little Sisters of the Poor is in this their work, and in the radiation of charity which it spreads abroad in the world. They are women devoted to one single work—the assistance of the aged. The field of their labours is immense.

CHAPTER XXXVII

IN ASIA

In the country of castes—Stories of the *quête*—Customs of the old people—Little missionaries of charity—In Hindustan, Ceylon, Burma, and China.

LET us take the road to Asia and visit the country distinguished by its numerous castes. M. Asphar, who had known the Little Sisters at Malta, and Mgr. Goëthals, who had known them in Belgium, agreed together to establish the hospitaller work in the capital of India: the merchant promised the passage money of six Little Sisters, and the Archbishop a piece of ground. "If you really wish to set foot in Asia," they wrote to the mother-house, "there are few towns which would present the same advantages as Calcutta. It is the seat of the English Government, situated in the centre of Asia in constant communication with the different parts of India, as well as with Burma, Indo-China, the peninsula of Malacca, Tibet, China, Japan, and Australia."

On November 30, 1882, the little colony landed at Calcutta, under a beautiful sky. The town extended along the banks of the Ganges. Conflicting sentiments filled the souls of the Little Sisters of the Poor. They had to begin the work in a hired house, to learn Bengali and Hindustani in order to speak to the people, to observe the distinction of castes in the care of the old people, and to acclimatize them-

selves under the torrid zone. At least the religious service was secured through the Jesuit Fathers in charge of the mission, and the European colony was full of sympathy.

On September 7 the two first poor entered: a little old woman, a native and a heathen, all doubled up, walking with a stick, as thin as a skeleton, and enveloped in a kind of sheet; then another woman, equally poor and infirm, but a Christian. Not being able to do better, they spoke to each other by signs, and the two poor old women, to show their gratitude, hid their faces in their hands and bowed to the ground. Happily the next day an East Indian woman arrived, a former governess, who spoke English, Bengali, and Hindustani, and who became the interpreter. A European, blind, deaf, infirm, and eighty-three years of age, was the first old man. A guard was necessary to protect the home: this was an Irishman, a former soldier and still strong, who entered on December 21, and was the first old man. An old East Indian sailor, seventy-three years old, did not delay long in joining them. The first group consisted altogether of four men and ten women, of whom three were Europeans and one an American.

Lord Ripon, who was then Viceroy, regularly gave the broken food from his table; he even wrote his name at the head of the begging Sister's subscription book with a donation of 500 rupees. The Baring family, who occupied an important situation, was benevolent and generous. The Ralli brothers, who conducted a great business between India and Mar-

seilles, rendered good service, and made the work known in their surroundings. The European town, which is like an enclosed town within the immense capital of the Hindus, presented resources, and willingly supported a free institution maintained by voluntary contributions. So the number of old people mounted progressively to thirty and forty, in spite of the inconstancy of the natives, always eager for liberty, and living upon little.

An exhibition, which took place in 1883, brought people of importance in India to Calcutta, and naturally this circumstance was utilized to procure resources for the definite establishment of the institution for the aged. Recommended by the English officials, the begging Sisters obtained an audience with the gorgeous Maharaja of Jaipur, who received them as mothers of the poor, and granted them 500 rupees. They also had an audience of the Nizam of Hyderabad, who received them with all the ceremony of his Court, granted them 200 rupees from his treasury, and gave hopes of an offering on his departure from Calcutta. After the audience, they conducted the two Little Sisters to the treasury-room, and in a moment they were surrounded by the natives who guarded the treasure. The one who was in charge of it counted out to them the promised rupees ten at a time. When there were 180, he stopped and said: "Look, here is your account." On the remark which the Little Sisters made, he declared that the 20 others had to be distributed between the guardians of the treasure. The Little Sister explained that the Nizam had granted 200

rupees, that it was money for the poor, and that she could not yield any of it. The dispute became warm, the natives approaching to hear and give their opinions. The guard, shaken, opened the safe again, and added 10 rupees. The Little Sister calm and firm, maintained the rights of the poor, and demanded the 200 rupees; the guard, conquered, made a last little heap of rupees, to the astonishment of his companions, and the alms-gatherers, putting the precious sum in the purse for the old people, went away quite cheerfully. The Nizam did not forget the Sisters of the poor old people; before returning to his province, he sent the generous offering of 1,200 rupees to the home.

In 1884, they counted eleven deceased and still had forty-six old people. They made further progress. A young girl, born in the colony, of English parents, well acclimatized, and knowing the languages and the ways of the people, entered as a postulant. Until then, they had received collected food and alms, but they had not begged in the market-place. On October 21, one Little Sister and the postulant presented themselves in the market; she gave some explanation on the work to several native merchants, who were at once won over to the cause. Seeing what they had taken, the two collectors went down the rows of the market-place, and almost all the market people, male and female, gave something for the poor old people: some a handful of rice, fruit, and vegetables; others some cotton, needles, and other little things. The provision of rice was henceforth secure; it was sufficient to go into the market-

place now and again. This was the prelude to another success. They began in the same way to make the collection in the quarter of the natives, and to receive their little charities. This brought about a charming episode.

The chief of the poorest caste, seeing that the Little Sisters avoided his quarter, was deputed by his people, and presented himself at the home, saying: "You visit and collect in the other streets, and you do not come to us because we are too poor: come." They chose a day for begging there. Having reached that miserable quarter, the Little Sisters saw the whole of the population, men, women, and children, standing in a straight line all along the road, gaily dressed, each holding a flower and a coin in his hands. Led by the chief, the Little Sisters received these simple offerings with emotion. Then the chief said to them: "Sisters, you adore the good God; we cannot pray to Him, we pray to our gods to prevent them hurting us, but you pray to God, that He may do us good." Truly charity carrying on its works is an apostleship, which contributes to make the Gospel known and to cause the Christian name to be blessed.

It was not till October, 1887, that the Little Sisters were able to quit their hired house, and to enter into possession of a property large enough to lodge their fifty inmates. The ladies of the colony, with Lady Dufferin, wife of the Governor, at their head, organized a bazaar successfully; the mother-house, for its part, sent some assistance, so that in 1888 the Little Sisters of Calcutta were able to pay the bills

falling due, including that for a piece of ground adjoining the property, and to establish a permanent establishment in this place. We will now pass over a period of ten years with a brief mention of a gift of 10,000 rupees granted by the Maharaja of Durbunga in 1898 to help on the buildings. We find there a vast hospice filled with old people, of whose customs we must now speak.

In Calcutta there are two classes entirely distinct, the Europeans and the Hindus. The aged Europeans had their own sitting-room and dormitory. A great number had seen better days; thus, among them were included four captains and many others, who by their former position were no less worthy of interest. This part of the home is similar to the houses elsewhere.

The Hindus are divided into Eurasians and natives, who, though not content to sleep in the same dormitory, are satisfied to be together in the sitting-room, provided their table and service be apart. The beds, the tables, and the chairs of the Eurasians are similar to those of the Europeans, so is the costume with a few personal exceptions, as the redda, the turban, and the bare feet. The ordinary food is the curry of the natives, to which is added some European dish.

The natives have a low bed; some want only a mat laid on the ground, others lay it on a light mattress or on a folded blanket. They take their meals at a low table, squatted on a mat or stool; some remain at a distance from the table because, according to their caste, they must eat apart.

"Our Little Sisters," says an account, "have not to trouble themselves to supply stockings and shoes, because, according to the habit of the country, everyone goes barefooted. Neither is the clothing too complicated—white trousers and a white waistcoat for men; a skirt and a white bodice for the women. As for nourishment, it is rice and always rice; there is nothing to do but to vary the sauce which is the famous curry of the Indies. Men and women smoke; they have, besides, a way of rolling in the shape of a cigarette the leaves of a certain plant. They fill it with very peculiar roots, and then cover the whole over with lime; they put that cigarette into their mouth, and keep rolling it about all day long. This mixture leaves a bright-red colour on the lips and teeth of the Indians. Our good old folks have preserved their Indian ways, and every Saturday our Little Sisters go and buy the leaves and lime which will make the old people happy all the week."

Mgr. Bonjean wrote on November 18, 1887: "We declare that we heartily welcome the foundation at Colombo by Mr. John Osphar of a house of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and receive the Sisters as co-operators in our apostolic works." Thus the establishment of Calcutta gave birth to that of Ceylon. Colombo, in the island of Ceylon, is a naval port of the first importance, therefore the European companies of navigation have made it a seaport of call for the vessels which carry the mails for India, China, Oceania. The Sisters of this foundation landed there on December 7, so that their first religious act was the annual ceremony of the renewal of the vows,

appointed for December 8, in union with the Sisters of the Order of all houses and climates. An old converted Brahmin who knew English, Bengali, and Tamil, was their first old man. The missionary Oblates of Mary secured the religious services to the home; they had also the consideration to offer the asylum an equipage after the fashion of the country, which consists of a cart drawn by a bullock.

The feast of Christmas did not pass by without surprise, because the first old people wished to do the things well. "Here," wrote the Superior, "they make great preparations for the feast of Christmas. The main point is to whiten the house and to let off fireworks. Our good folks have not been behindhand. They made us start in our beds in the middle of the night because they set fire to whole packets of fireworks to wish us a happy Christmas. At breakfast, they threw flowers over us and sprinkled us with scented water."

The development of the home was progressive because it was necessary to make it known, to enlist sympathy, to collect resources, and to organize a vast establishment; it is the old, old story. In 1888 the hospice counted twenty-seven old people, of whom five were Buddhists and one a Protestant; in 1894 it counted eighty old persons, all Cingalese, with the exception of two or three. Since then, the home has exceeded a hundred, and is still growing. "The Indians of Colombo, called Cingalese, are generally gentler, more intelligent, and much less superstitious than those of Calcutta. There, more even than in Calcutta, they have kept their Indian customs; they

have no European beds, but a mat placed on four crossbars of wood, and covered with a blanket; they are willing to sit on a chair. As for the spoon, almost all eat their rice with their fingers, at which they are very dexterous, and do not lose a grain."

Already, in 1892, a certain number of heathens had become Christians. The first woman who entered the home became the schoolmistress, and the godmother to almost all the converts. Every morning, she called her companions to the verandah for prayers. In the evening, the good women were gathered around her bed, sitting on their heels, listening to, and repeating the prayers which the old godmother taught them. "In Colombo our good old people do not say their prayers, they sing them all, and as the Indian language has several very different dialects, they are united in groups according to their language, and each sing their devotions in their turn."

A native gentleman gave them a meal such as is usual in the country. Having assembled the old people before the front door, he gave every old person a straw plate, on which he put a portion of rice and three cakes of very oily rice, fruit, tobacco, betel-nut, and a small coin of threepence. There was also for everyone a redda (which is a piece of stuff used for trousers for men, and dress for the women). It was touching to see with what respect that man gave his alms to each poor person; he almost knelt down on the ground, and the good people made the sign of the cross on him, as if to give him their blessing.

One day an old man arrived at the home, he said he was 100 years old, and that he had been walking

for twenty days. He could go no farther, and said: "I cannot walk any longer; I am going to remain here until you put me under the earth. I want to be a Christian." He had been by profession a devil-dancer at the festivals of the heathens.

Colombo resembles India very much, and on certain days the Sisters meet troops of heathens carrying their idols in procession, and going to offer sacrifices to their gods. The Little Sisters grieve over this false worship: "Living in the midst of heathens, witnessing their idolatry, one can only pray, and ask for a spark of the true light for them. In the evening, when we recite our office, the noise of their music gives us fervour; at least, in one small place, the praises of the only true God are sung." Such were the first experiences of Calcutta and Colombo; but little by little the Little Sisters grew accustomed to things, and were happy to be the missionaries of charity.

Their institutions continue to extend. Two young women of Burma, prevented from joining the congregation, had gathered together some old poor in Rangoon. This pious work had been going on for ten years when Mgr. Cardot came to visit the mother-house, and succeeded in obtaining the Little Sisters of the Poor for Burma. They settled down in the capital on November 21, 1898, and began to develop the charitable undertaking, while the two promoters sailed for Europe to enter the novitiate. The Rev. Luce was pleased to offer the Sisters a pony and cart; he also assisted the Sisters in their spiritual needs. The Bishop even condescended to be the chaplain

of the home for three months. The old people, though still keeping their customs, treat each other with fraternal kindness; thus the natives of Burma and of Madras help one another, the Chinese lends his arm to the infirm Indian, the Indian woman leads the lame Tamil, who still wears glass and metal trinkets on the hands and feet. The building, like those of the country is of brick, with ground-floor and upper story, roofed with zinc. The home is surrounded by a verandah. Charity is highly appreciated among the Burmans. One day, when inhabitants of every race, creed, colour, and dress were assembled, the good Mother said: "I do not think, among all these people, there is a single person who is not in some way our benefactor." The home is on the road leading to a celebrated pagoda, and groups of twelve to fifteen persons sometimes stop to visit it. They question the old folks, look at what is going on, and leave a part of the offering which they intended for Buddha. The King's sister herself kindly receives the begging Sisters every month, and, not content with her own offering, she invites the ladies in attendance to give something to the "Little Sisters who came from France for the love of the poor."

The foundation of Bangalore in Hindustan was made at the request of Mgr. Kleiner, who also, with paternal solicitude, provided for the religious service. The Rev. Tabard, from the cathedral, made all preparations with great care and kindness. On April 29, 1900, the Little Sisters of the Poor took possession of a villa called Bretonville (as if to remind them of

the birthplace of their Order). In spite of the unavoidable distinction of castes, they succeeded in making fifty old people comfortable. In order to appreciate the touching piety of these poor people, they must be seen in the chapel where they prostrate themselves and advance to the altar on their knees, with hands outstretched. The zealous missionaries encourage this piety by their instructions given in the different languages of the country. Let us add the testimony of an eye-witness: "A look of happiness, not often seen, alas! on the poor Indian faces, prevails in the home of Bangalore, from good old Chinaa-Ma, the first admitted, who puts all the newcomers at home (especially those of her own caste), down to poor Agnes, formerly a pagan, who cannot speak without sobbing for her eight children who died of the plague, but who yet smiles when she adds: 'The priest, who made me Agnes, brought me here.' As a rule, all these black faces have the contented look of the good old folks in Europe."

According to the desire expressed by Mgr. Vigano, the Little Sisters of the Poor founded a home at Hyderabad in Hindustan in 1903. Welcomed by the English colony, they made their way through pagans and Mohammedans, numerous in that district. The Fathers of the Foreign Missions of Milan, and the Fathers of the Foreign Missions of Paris at Bangalore and Rangoon, are very kind to the home of the old people at Hyderabad.

At the request of the Jesuit Fathers who have charge of the Kiang-Nan Mission, the Little Sisters of the Poor entered China and began a foundation in

Shanghai in the beginning of 1904. Shortly after, the home sheltered seventy-two old women, all united by Christian charity. With them the Sisters are "Little Mothers," and they call each other by the sweet name of "sister." On feast-days it is a pleasure for the Chinese Catholics to send them a dinner ready cooked.

These foundations in Asia, in the midst of new races, new manners, new religions, constituted a decisive experience for the congregation. The work of charity has been acclimatized amongst them, and has adapted itself to the new conditions by retaining the same methods and spirit which had succeeded hitherto in other countries. The institution kept its original constitutions, though under a somewhat different form, necessitated by the variety of climates and of the different national customs of the old people. But these differences are only superficial; the substance remains the same.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

IN OCEANIA

In the Southern Hemisphere—The wooden house—The stone house—The postulants—At the end of the world—Success of the work in Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia.

AUSTRALIA was rapidly colonized, and towns which could compete in importance with the great cities of England and the United States arose on this new soil. The clergy displayed great zeal in following the movement and in organizing the service of charity in all its branches, and this zeal resulted in an appeal being made to the Little Sisters of the Poor on behalf of the aged.

On Wednesday, November 5, 1884, the Little Sisters first saw the town of Melbourne as it stretched out before them. There in the fifth continent they were to implant the hospitaller family; the sight of the city and the thought of their mission moved them greatly. In the evening the ship entered the harbour; three priests received the Little Sisters of the Poor, and conducted them without delay to the cathedral to pay the first visit to our Lord; then, while the bells of the cathedral were ringing merrily to announce the good news, they conducted them to the Archbishop's house, and then to the house of the new foundation, where all had been prepared to receive them, and where, as a sign of festival, all the apart-

ments were illuminated and decorated with flowers. The next day the ladies welcomed the hospitaller Sisters, and each one presented her offering to the home which was now inaugurated. The first old person received was a woman who had fallen from a good position. She had known the work in Europe. and in her poverty she earnestly prayed to God to send the Little Sisters to Melbourne, so that she might die in their arms. Her desire was granted. She thought she had found Paradise in the home. She found it in reality soon after, for she survived but a short time.

They spent Christmas under the hot summer sun, and decorated the crib with magnificent flowers. It appeared very strange to our Little Sisters from Europe to find summer when in the Northern Hemisphere it was winter; but they were in the Southern Hemisphere, in the Antipodes, and when the day shone in Oceania, night cast her veil over Europe.

Soon they grew accustomed to and loved this new fatherland. Their only trouble was that their house was not large enough to lodge the poor old people who presented themselves. Friends pressed them to take more, and already they desired to see the Little Sisters with 200 or 300 poor, as the town offered enough resources to support them, and it was necessary to assist the unfortunate poor promptly. It is characteristic of the new towns of the colonies that so many things are undertaken at the same time, and success is largely an affair of speculation. The Little Sisters began by securing a plot of land at Northcote, a little way out of the town, situated on

a hill and with good air. But how were they to instal themselves in the little farm in the midst of the open country? A gentleman began the foundation in an original fashion: he said to the Little Sisters that he would give them £100 for the installation at Northcote, on condition that they would find someone who would give them a like sum. Some days after the partner was found, and there was £200 in hand. A lady made an offer on the same conditions, and another benefactor was again found. Thus £400 was collected. A third person renewed the proceeding with the same success. They thus had £600, to which a gift of £350 was added by Archbishop Gould. With this sum and the gifts from the collections, the new hospitallers resolved, upon favourable advice of the mother-house, to erect a provisional building of wood on the plot of land, like those in use in the country, and to connect it by a covered and enclosed gallery with the two farm-houses. On November 26, 1885, the house was blessed; the Little Sisters were installed with 100 old people and 6 postulants.

In the autumn of 1886 a colony of Little Sisters of the Poor was at sea, going from Marseilles to Sydney. During the long days of the passage the Little Sisters were preoccupied. They feared lest, on arriving, they should find a house ready furnished to receive them, and they would not have the joy of building up the foundation, for the Little Sisters loved to begin with nothing and to draw all from Providence. Now, twenty ladies were at the harbour to receive them. Nevertheless, not knowing how the

house was to be established, they did not think of inquiring if the Little Sisters had shelter or food; consequently they began in the midst of poverty, and spent a night worthy of a foundation, since they were absolutely destitute. This delighted the Sisters. The next day everything changed: Providence sent beds, chairs, furniture, bread, meat, fruit, and tea, and some poor people were admitted. First of all, it was necessary to clean the house, the garden, and the yard; carefully to inspect the furniture which the good ladies generously placed at the disposition of the Little Sisters and poor old people; to organize the begging expeditions; to make themselves known, and to reply both to curious and friendly questions. People soon knew the Little Sisters of the Poor in the quarter of Leithhard, then in the town, then in the district. During the first days poor people of all ages presented themselves. Of course, they had to be received by the Little Sisters of the Poor. Explanations were given, and it was understood that this was a home only for old people. The first inmates—two old men, one eighty-two and the other eighty-five years, and five old women almost as old —undertook to explain matters. This happened in November. The following month the members of the Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul, bringing a beautiful horse, nicely harnessed, and a cart for the collection, came to offer their congratulations and their services to the Little Sisters; moreover, they gave a grand dinner to the good old people of the home.

At Sydney, at the time of foundation, a man

almost blind arrived from Woolhara, walking on two crutches; it took him several days to make the journey, usually one of a few hours. He came alone, without any recommendation, having learned that some Sisters had come from France to take care of the aged. Everything about him proclaimed his misery; he was covered with dust and vermin, his eyes were half closed and inflamed through want of care, his hair was matted, and his beard unkempt. The Little Sisters received him with charity and respect; one of them obtained the favour of cleaning him. He submissively accepted the services of the Little Sister. When his clothes were changed and his rags burned, when his feet had been washed, his beard and hair cut, and his sore eyes attended to, the poor man called the Little Sister, and opening a little linen bag which he had carefully kept near him, he drew out a little parcel of pennies and gave them to her, saying: "Here, this is for you. I did not think to find such good people in the world!"

The foundation had its trial. On Wednesday, March 22, 1887, the good Mother, Alexandrine, died from typhoid fever. The Archbishop himself gave the General Absolution, and the Vicar-General accompanied the body to the cemetery. The Church and the friends honoured, in the first Little Sister of the Poor who died in Oceania, the devotedness and sacrifices of the religious and the hospitaller life. This sad circumstance hastened the acquisition of a plot of land in a healthy position at Randwick, near the sea. The Sisters cleared the ground, and erected there a comfortable habitation of planks, as in Mel-

bourne. In the spring of 1888, the Little Sisters installed themselves there finally with their fifty-six old people and their postulants.

After a time the establishments at Melbourne and Sydney renounced their wooden houses. The stone house was now erected; it developed gradually and became a vast hospice, where hundreds of poor old people will find shelter and finish their days. On September 8, 1889, a considerable crowd, which may be estimated at about 10,000 persons, were crammed together in the enclosure at Melbourne. Archbishop Carr blessed the first stone, and made a very appropriate discourse in favour of the institution, to which Sir William Robinson, the Governor, replied in terms of praise. Those present contributed on the spot £600 for an establishment of which the public authorities proclaimed the humane, religious, and social utility. In 1898 Cardinal Moran, who had been the promoter of the foundation in Sydney, laid and blessed the first stone in the capital, and the public made a collection of £500 during the ceremony itself. In 1901 a house for novices was erected in Sydney, so that the hospitaller work is well implanted in Australia.

The Primate of Auckland, Bishop Luck, had met two Sisters in the streets of Melbourne at the time of their arrival in that town, and asked if they were the Little Sisters of the Poor. On their reply in the affirmative, he visited the home and prepared the way for a foundation in New Zealand. On June 13, 1888, two Little Sisters landed at Auckland in order to see how matters stood. In spite of the

burden of the Catholic Mission, the clergy and the influential families gave them so hearty a welcome, that they did not hesitate to rent a house and to open the home, without waiting for the arrival of a colony of Little Sisters who started immediately. The mother-house came to their aid, and they secured, four months afterwards, a plot of land of five acres, with a house at the seaside. Even there it was necessary to add a building of wood to lodge the men; but this provisional state lasted but for a time, and the material development of the home followed the development of New Zealand. Thus, in 1905 a stone building was erected next to the wooden one in Auckland, and another home was opened in Dunedin, in the southern part of South Island.

One circumstance deserves to be noticed—the Sisters in the first establishments in Oceania, though belonging to nations of diverse origin, did not one instant vary in their attachment to their centre of unity, and made the deeds of property so as to bind strongly every distant house to the mother-house. Such were the constant sentiments, moreover, of all the Little Sisters of the Poor in all places and in all countries.

In the "History of the Catholic Church in Australasia,"* by Cardinal Moran, we find this important appreciation: "There is one other community of which mention must not be omitted. This is the Little Sisters of the Poor. They entered on their work in Melbourne in 1884, and already they

* Pp. 994-996.

have erected there a home for the aged poor worthy of the ennobling charity which they represent. They have since then extended their ministrations of charity to Sydney and Auckland, having opened in both cities homes where with motherly care they attend to the wants of the aged poor." To complete his appreciation, the eminent author reproduced the impressions of a visitor to Queensland in 1892: "The visitor to Sydney should not in his travels forget to visit the Little Sisters of the Poor in Randwick. Of all the religious Orders in the Church, there is perhaps none other which appeals so warmly to our highest admiration for the noble sacrifice of its members to the service of the poor. The only qualification for admission into the houses of the poor is that the applicant be entirely destitute. It matters not what religion he professes." The great heart of the city of Sydney quickly responded to the solicitations of the Sisters, always on foot for their old people, who are in their eyes the most precious object of all earthly possessions. Beds, food, and clothing arrived, not only from Catholics, but from non-Catholics, and many—very many—of the latter are counted amongst the best benefactors of the institution. In the men's quarters you will find some who have seen better days, and, if you have a minute or two to spare, they will charm you with their conversation. "Nothing could exceed the tenderness we receive here," says one old man from Cork; "these Sisters are always ready to anticipate our wants and our wishes." "At the end of the building is a smoking room for the old men, not too

luxuriantly fitted up, but snug and comfortable. It was here I met a Welshman named Jones. Mr. Jones was fond of Hebrew, and he was engaged in reading the Psalms in Hebrew—not a small task for an old man."

Another house was established in New Caledonia at Nouméa in February, 1897. The first colonists were still alive and active, whilst the native population, consisting of Kanakas, occupied a great part of the soil; and a penitentiary settlement was placed in some of the islands of the archipelago. The first inmates consisted of old settlers who had not succeeded in acquiring the good things of this world, and who unfortunately had forgotten the higher spiritual goods. The Little Sisters opened a home for this double misery—for body and soul. As the town was still thinly peopled, it was necessary to traverse the district in order to find resources. A mining engineer and the Marist missionaries served as protectors.

One or two episodes are given here: "The Little Sisters have gone to the natives, who have two important tribes near Païta, half of which are already Catholic, the other half still heathen. The Sisters beg coffee from them. The blacks who remained in the village told the Sisters that every Saturday the chiefs gathered together for a council, and that they would talk together about the coffee to be given to the poor." The council took place. "The missionary of Païta is one of us." Consequently about forty of his tribes visited him, and spread out their gifts

before him—cabbages, yams, coffee, chickens, etc. "See, Father, this is for the Sisters who came the other day;" and a native barque was loaded and sent to the Sisters.

"We have for friend and benefactress Mary Vamytan, the chief of the Kanaka tribe of Saint Louis. She brought us to her home; it is one of the few huts in which one can enter without stooping, and there is an astonishing mixture of the most primitive customs, together with traces of civilization. Near the plank, covered with a mat and used as a bed, one is surprised to see an alarm clock and a candlestick. She spends her life working on the land like the other women of her tribe." In the same way the Sisters made acquaintance with Queen Hortense, who had exchanged her little kingdom of the Isle of Pines for a pension, and who cultivated coffee, bananas, vanilla, and the sugar-cane.

An establishment adapted to the customs of the country and to the double aim of the Little Sisters' charity in New Caledonia has been built on the ground given by the mission. The discharged convicts, though admitted, have their apartments entirely separated from those of the other people, but in the chapel under the regard of the Divine Master no distinction is made, for all are equally dear to His tender mercy.

CHAPTER XXXIX

IN EUROPE

In Constantinople—The feasts of the old people—At Madeira —Statistics of the hospitaller work and general considerations.

RETURNING to the point of departure, let us mention twenty-one foundations: one in England, Hanley, 1890; five in France: Paris (Auteuil) in 1897, a fourth house in Lyons, Versailles, a third house in Marseilles, Sedan, in 1901; two in Belgium: Malines, 1890, a second house in Antwerp in 1893; one in Switzerland, Lucerne, in 1900; one in Turkey, Constantinople, in 1892; four in Italy: Padua, 1892, Marino in 1893, Bologna, 1895, Genoa, 1900; three in Spain: Gracia in 1890, a third house in Madrid, Arenys-de-Mar in 1897; two in Portugal: Porto in 1895, Covilha in 1902; Funchal, in the island of Madeira (Africa); one in Hungary, at Budapest, in 1905.

The foundation in Lucerne marks the return of the Little Sisters of the Poor to Switzerland, and the welcome which their work received there is the best conclusion of the previous painful incident.* The house was naturally put under the patronage of Our Lady of Einsiedeln. The central position of Lucerne and the attraction which it has for tourists tend to

* See Chapter XXIV.

make known the hospitaller institution throughout the whole Alpine region. Once more the work is in contact with the German language.

Constantinople attracts us through its Oriental style. The Prefect Apostolic prepared the way. A man of seventy offered his house, and thus stripped of all his goods, entered, as one of its poor pensioners, the home of the Little Sisters of the Poor. A banker, a Greek by origin and religion, became the principal benefactor. At Christmas, 1896, the establishment was erected on a plot of land purchased; in 1900 it sheltered 125 old people. There are Orthodox and Catholic Christians of the Latin rite and of the Oriental rite; they speak Turkish, Armenian, Greek, Italian, and French. These diverse elements make the population in the great cosmopolitan city very fluctuating. The first appearance of the begging Sisters in the market-place of Stamboul was marked by an amusing adventure. The two Little Sisters were returning with their horse, which, as is customary in the country, was laden with two large baskets. The market people had filled up these baskets. As the Sisters crossed the old bridge of Stamboul, the baskets began to slip, as the weight was not equally balanced. The old driver stopped the quiet old horse whilst the two Sisters endeavoured to put things straight, and establish equilibrium between the baskets and their contents. The curious ran up and watched. Presently a Pasha passed over the bridge with his retinue; he also looked and stopped, but only to cry out in a loud voice without dismounting: "You are donkeys. Help those mara-

bouts instead of watching them." This command produced an instantaneous effect; the Turks pushed the baskets vigorously, and their contents regained equilibrium; then the horse trotted on in safety with his burden towards the home.

The course of events now recalls us to Portugal, where the work completes its installation. The house, established in the capital in 1884, had developed by the acquisition of a plot of land. The deed of purchase was signed on July 4, 1887, the Feast of Saint Isabella, Queen of Portugal. The King, Don Luis, contributed to the buildings by granting 1,440 cubic metres of pine-wood from the forest of Leiria. In 1899 the establishment sheltered 180 old people.

In Lisbon the people of the town and of the Court took pleasure in visiting the home for the old people on festival days. The sight of their happiness, their simple, contented expression, their respect for the Little Sisters, their gratitude to the benefactors, interested everybody. On these days the poor were served like Princes by the first families of the country for the sake of Jesus Christ, who said: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me." After the clearing of the tables and the distribution of cigars, there was a song which made more impression than all the music—a song by the old people with trembling and quavering voices, sustained when necessary by the younger voices of the Little Sisters.

There are, indeed, festivals at the home, with Sunday clothes, feasts, songs, and recreation. As

the work forms a hospitaller family, the consequence is that the Little Sisters associate their old people with the feast of the congregation and of the house, as well as with the great feasts of the Church. This gives them pleasure, and breaks the monotony of their existence. It gives them the feeling of being at home, and attaches them to the house. These little festivals form part of the hospitaller charity, and are one of its pleasing manifestations. The old people are very sensible to this attention, and become attached to these red-letter days. The translation given below will give an idea of these little songs:

"Benefactors, in the Gospel we read
That Jesus loved the humble and the little;
He was always ready to receive them,
And He inclined to good their hearts and minds.

"Man can be happy without riches—
Here we learn it. The source of happiness
Is in the peace of soul and the sweet joy
That virtue gives, which is a help to all.

"God always protects us by His providence:
He gives us daily the bread we need.
We feel in this house His faithful assistance,
And daily we bless Him in return.

"He founded for us the Little Family,
The protecting shelter of our old age;
He gives us friends without number:
Their goodness of heart forms our happiness."

In Lisbon, after a walk and a little conversation, came the religious service. The chapel, simply and suitably ornamented, as is usual with the Little

Sisters of the Poor, pleased everybody: people thought better of the God of the poor in the absence of gilding and brilliant decorations. One of the elements of interest for strangers in the ceremonies at the chapel is to hear the old people pray and sing. Nothing can equal the impression which the benefactors feel when the old people sing in unison the simple familiar hymns, which they sing with spirit.

While the institution of the Little Sisters accomplishes its works of benevolence, their charity is an unequivocal witness which touches the heart, convinces the intelligence, and wins men over to the practice of virtue and the true faith. An anti-Catholic journalist of the capital confirms this statement. "I had gone to the home of the Little Sisters," he confessed, "more through malice than curiosity, seeking something to say against religious communities. I asked leave to inspect the home. The Sister who received me went to fetch a companion. They showed me a large room filled with old women: these were the healthiest of the inmates; they were very old, but all looked contented. I felt touched by the sight, and I put some questions to the Sisters who accompanied me. Their bearing was modest, their words discreet. When I tried to speak against religion they cleverly turned the conversation. We visited the infirmary; the infirm were sitting in arm-chairs, all very clean and cheerful, and all appeared very happy. I was more and more touched, and did not know what was passing within me. Presently I heard a bell. I then saw all those old people going to the chapel, some leaning on the arm of a Sister,

others helping each other along; the sight was touching. I had the curiosity to enter and to follow the ceremony (for years I had not entered a church). They began the rosary; all the old people began to pray with devotion and piety. At first I listened, at last I prayed. They sang the litanies. How surprised I was to hear all those people sing! Those old people with white hair, blind, lame, paralyzed even, all sang, all were happy. I, too, was happy, for I had taken the resolution to return to God and never to speak evil of religion."

The foundation at Porto took place on January 2, 1895, at the request of Mademoiselle de Miranda and Madame de Samodães, of Cardinal Americo Ferreira dos Santos Silva, Bishop of the diocese, and of General Sarmento, the Governor of the town. A house capable of holding thirty-five old people was lent by two good ladies. The Little Sisters met with benevolence on every side; thus the first time they appeared in the market-place, six policemen were there to protect and accompany them. The society of tramways gave them free tickets; the gas company gratuitously supplied gas to the home; a friendly society offered medicines, coffins, etc. The development of the home for old age began in December, 1896, with the purchase of two hectares of land for 60,000 francs, of which 30,000 were paid down at once by the inhabitants. Madame Passanha organized a snowball to help the building fund. This means of benevolence consisted of asking for fifty centimes from a person who engages to make the same request to a third person. Fifty ladies

consented to lead the work, and rivalled each other in their devotedness; they organized charity boxes in shops, hotels, etc. The snowball rolled through all Portugal and as far as Brazil. The students gave a feast in aid of it, which brought in £100; the children emptied their money-boxes, and deprived themselves of their toys; the workmen and workwomen made collections in the manufactories; no one refused a contribution. Thus the snowball brought in more than 52,000 francs, and they had the joy on November 5, 1897, of laying the first stone of the establishment.

The hospitaller work henceforth had a series of posts along the Atlantic Ocean, from Ireland to the Cape of Gibraltar. It established a new one, August 27, 1900, in the Island of Madeira, on the African coast. The Bishop of Funchal thus announced the work to the inhabitants of his diocese: "One of the great aspirations of our soul was to see the hospitaller institution of the Little Sisters of the Poor established in our diocese. The hour has come, and we have at Funchal a staff of Sisters and a house of shelter for old, poor, and infirm people, who have no relations nor the resources necessary to maintain them to the end of their lives. This humble congregation is devoted to the exercise of charity in its sublimest and most devoted forms. We willingly approve of this new institute, and we exhort the well-beloved inhabitants of our diocese to help this work of charity according to their power."

The year 1901 was marked in some countries by certain restrictive measures affecting liberty of

religious Orders; but how are we to secure assistance for human miseries in time of peace, war, and epidemics without those who make a profession of devotedness, and without those supernatural motives which engender sacrifice? In Portugal, so far as the hospitaller institution was concerned, the trial was of short duration, and ended in a decree of the Government, dated "Paço, October 18, 1901," signed "Ernest Rodolph Hintze Ribeiro," in which it was stated that "His Majesty the King, to whom the statutes have been presented, according to which the association of the Little Sisters of the Poor is carried on, has deigned to grant them his approbation." The three establishments of Lisbon, Porto, and Funchal are specified in this decree.

In 1902 the Little Sisters arrived in Covilha. Sixteen years before, two venerable priests had offered them their own house to begin a home, but the time fixed by Providence had not come, so the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul had begun a charitable work for the aged; but at last they prevailed upon the Little Sisters of the Poor to take it under their care.

Other foundations are preparing, but we must leave the future to God, and confine our account to the work accomplished in the nineteenth century. This is the way in which the houses of the Little Sisters of the Poor are founded: they trust all to Providence, and already Providence has replied to their appeal 300 times. Thus every home has its history, each full of the providence of God, and, at the same time, of the power of sacrifice. But, in

order to estimate the power of action of this organization of charity, we must have recourse to figures. A table of statistics drawn up by the central office of the works of benevolence, and referring to the houses of Paris for the period 1846 to 1896—that is, fifty years—will serve as a basis:

"We willingly seek to ascertain all that the great works have produced, and in what measure they have been efficient in relieving poverty since their foundation. Knowing how many beds each of the houses of the department of the Seine contains, and knowing for how many years it has been opened, it is easy for us to calculate how many days of individual relief it ought to have supplied since its foundation if it had always been full. The house in the Rue Saint Jacques gives the following statistics, 2,978,400 days; that in the Avenue de Breteuil, 4,533,300; that in the Rue Picpus, 4,143,480; that in the Rue Notre Dame-des-Champs, 4,316,025; that in the Rue Philippe-de-Girard, 3,444,870; that in Saint Denis, 786,940; that of Levallois, 410,625—which gives a total of 20,613,640 days of relief. But, considering that since their inauguration the number of their beds has been slightly augmented, that all those beds may not have been constantly occupied, we will reduce this sum by a quarter, which will still give us a total of more than fifteen millions.

"If we make a similar calculation for all the houses of France and the colonies, the sum which we shall obtain will exceed 130 millions—130 million days for which, without cash furnished in advance, the Little Sisters of the Poor have been obliged to provide in

haste every morning by going from door to door. What daily trouble and fatigue! What an incessant prodigy of activity does the execution of such a programme represent! And, in order for the Little Sisters to have been able to procure for themselves, from hand to mouth, the means to lodge, feed, warm, and clothe such a vast number of the unfortunate poor, must they not have found a public benevolence, a co-operation and a sympathy proportioned to their admirable devotedness?"

If we continue these statistics, drawn up only for France, and if we apply them to the other nations, bringing them up to the commencement of the twentieth century, and counting the 290 houses existing at that date, we obtain an approximate total of 300 million days of succour. Simply from the human point of view this result gives the idea of a work of high social solidarity; from the evangelical point of view it gives the sentiment of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Christ.

History must inquire whether the institution of the Little Sisters of the Poor has remained faithful to itself and to its law. Most decidedly it has freed itself from secondary views and objects in order to appear distinctly as a work for the aged, where all is subordinated to this single object—the succour of poor old age. The aspect is exteriorly modified; it is no longer "the little work" in the feebleness and humility of the "small beginnings"—small in number, little known, insecurely established: time and success have co-operated to make it a powerful

corporation having its constitutions, centre, provinces, novitiates, and 300 hospitaller establishments.

It is upon these figures that the only criticism which has been attempted against the institution itself rests. One need not fear to face it, and see what foundation it may have. If one numbers the houses of the hospitaller work, in reality there is an important capital engaged—a stock, if you like to call it so. But let it be considered that no house has an income, no bed is endowed, there is no reserve fund; that there is no pecuniary remuneration, since the old people are the perpetual owners, so to say, of this capital, and consequently it must remain unproductive for the congregation. And, further, the congregation is under the moral obligation to manage these foundations as the patrimony of the aged poor, to supply the staff of service, to provide for the maintenance and repairs of the houses, to pay off the taxes and ordinary rates. Also, to obviate any inconveniences which might arise, the rule prescribes that "the buildings of the congregation and their furniture shall be congenial to the spirit of holy poverty," and that "it shall be a point of honour to impress them with a seal of simplicity which shall strike the beholder." Besides, what good would it be to form a common capital? Is it not better to leave to every country and town their separate homes? Is not the hospitaller house fixed to the soil destined for the abandoned old people of the place, and supported by the spontaneous liberality of the inhabitants of that region? This being the case, the right of

property of the congregation and the possessions of the Little Sisters of the Poor are reduced in practice to the bare possession of the property with all its charges and a population of more than 42,000 old invalids to provide for.

It is to this organization that the hospitaller institution owes: (1) Its existence in all places as a free corporation of benevolence, working by itself, without budget and without money grants, without administrators and without employees; (2) its popular work of private charity, subsisting on anonymous donations, which surrounds itself with discretion, flees from praise, and operates in silence, or otherwise reserves itself; (3) the maintenance of the evangelical genius of charity by the adoption of old people, by the social and family life led by the old people, and by the absolute devotedness of the Sisters to their charges, and by their filial confidence in Providence.

CHAPTER XL

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NOVITIATES

Sydney—Madrid—Antwerp—Rome—New York—The holy habit—The ceremonies of clothing and profession—A statement.

THE commencement of the twentieth century saw the installation of a novitiate at Sydney, in Australia, and the completion of the establishment of the new novitiates.* A family having effected the foundation of a third house in Madrid with success, the transfer of the novitiate of Spain was accomplished on February 24, 1897, from Bilbao to the Barrio of the Prosperidad at Madrid, where they only retained a limited number of old people. It is a quiet spot, at the entrance of the capital; the house is enclosed in a garden. Large buildings of two stories, with galleries, afford room for 100 novices and postulants. Mgr. de Cos y Macho blessed the chapel on July 8, 1899, and made a charming comparison: "Besides the temple which I have just blessed, I have many others before me, for, as Saint Paul says, 'Every Christian is the temple of God.' The novices are like new temples, which they must decorate with all the virtues."

In Belgium the novitiate roughly installed in the Rue de Hollande, Antwerp, was established on

* See Chapter XXXV.

April 19, 1897, and at Kiel, on the other side of the Scheldt, on a property given by two benefactors. The building is in brick; there is a gallery in the front of the house on the ground floor, and two wings. This establishment provides accommodation for 100 novices and postulants and a few old people. The situation is peaceful, planted with trees, and has a kitchen garden. In March, 1900, Cardinal Goossens, Archbishop of Malines, presided at a profession, and, after having testified his deep affection for the hospitaller work, represented the existence of the Little Sisters of the Poor as being a life of prayer, sacrifice, and zeal.*

On July 1, 1893, the congregation had acquired a property of sixteen hectares with a dwelling house at Marino, in the Castelli Romani. The site is very beautiful with the view of woody mountains to the east, and of Rome and the sea to the west. The establishment is erected on a table-land planted with

* Already, in 1886, the Archbishop of Malines had rendered this testimony: "The Little Sisters of the Poor answer in a remarkable manner to the object of their institution. In our diocese, to several hundreds of old people of both sexes, they provide shelter, maintenance, and assistance. Their principal aim is to procure for them a good and holy death. The only resource of the Sisters for their own support and that of their old people is charity, which they receive from the rich and in the public market-places, and which, thank God, has never failed them. They are kindly received by everyone, and no one denies that they practise excellent virtues, such as patience, humility, and charity, which causes them to be everywhere the edification of Christian people."

vines, and the steeple is in the shape of a dome, surmounted with the statue of Saint Joseph, which has given the property the name of Vigna San Giuseppe. The building extends on both sides of the chapel, it is made up of a ground floor, a first story with galleries in the front, and of a first story and attics on the two wings. There also is space for 100 novices and postulants and a few old people. An auxiliary priest,* acting in the name of the Little Sisters, took an important part in this foundation, and the Dominican Fathers,† who had favoured the new aspect of the organization of the hospitaller congregation, presided at the first ceremonies of clothing and profession. On April 7, 1899, Mgr. Serafino Vannutelli, first Cardinal Protector of the congregation, honoured the Roman novitiate with a visit. In reply to the address of the Sisters, he expressed the sentiments of deep benevolence which animated him, recalling the impression which he had felt in his youth on hearing of the beautiful work of the Little Sisters of the Poor. He spoke of the place which it occupies in the Church, its character of self-abnegation, the service which it renders to the aged poor, and the promises made by Jesus Christ to those who care for them: "The name you bear of Little Sisters of the Poor is beautiful; it makes you small in the eyes of the world, as you are the servants of the poor. But God's views are different to men's

* Mgr. Julius Deltour.

† Mentioned on pp. 108 and 224. The rosary is a devotion in honour among the Sisters and old people, as it is specially suited for the sick and aged.

views; what is small in the eyes of the world is great in the eyes of God."

On March 25, 1901, the first profession took place in the novitiate of Brooklyn, United States. Eleven novices were professed. Mgr. MacDonell said to them: "A province is now founded on our dear American soil, and you are the first fruits of this novitiate of Brooklyn. I hope that this small grain which has been planted here will become a great tree, like that of France, and that the Little Sisters who shall be formed in this novitiate will also have the same strong virtues as the first Little Sisters. Do not let yourselves be surpassed by your companions, who have not been trained here; show that in America we know how to practise virtue as Christians practise it elsewhere." The attempt having proved satisfactory, a building was erected for that purpose at Queens, in the State of New York, at some distance from the great city. The blessing of the new novitiate took place on October 15, 1902, by the Bishop of Brooklyn, who congratulated the Sisters on the good arrangement of the establishment and the choice of a situation so favourable to religious training by its solitude and devout atmosphere.

On September 17 the Cardinal Archbishop inaugurated the novitiate of Sydney in an establishment situated not far from the first house, which had previously served the Sisters of Loretto for their schools. Vested in cope and mitre, the Cardinal solemnly blessed the two hundred and ninetieth house of the institute, and said that he was happy

to open a novitiate of the Little Sisters of the Poor, where he hoped that many Australian girls would come to be trained in the practice of virtue. He exalted the hospitaller vocation, which he compared to the mission of our Saviour among the poor; he praised the work of its conception and in its result, and said how much it was appreciated by Protestants as well as Catholics. Finally, he exhorted the postulants, who formed the nucleus of the house, to walk in the evangelic ways of humility, abnegation, and sacrifice.

The postulants wear a habit not unlike the secular dress: a plain dress, a black cape, a white goffered bonnet, and for the offices in the chapel, a veil in black tulle. They take the holy habit when they become novices of the Order. This consists of a black serge dress, held in at the waist by a woollen cord, a black merino kerchief crossed over the chest, a white neckerchief, and the head-band on the forehead,* shoes of common leather, and white bonnet fastened under the chin. In this garb, with a calm and serene face, a modest bearing, they go about among the old people. In the chapel and out of doors they wear the large black serge cloak which covers them completely; they raise the hood over the head, and thus go forth modestly clothed like the poor peasant women of France.

The ordinary duration of the postulate and novitiate is two complete years, which are devoted to

* The novices wear the head-band concealed to distinguish them from those who are professed. This is the only exterior difference in the habit.

religious instruction, hospitaller formation, attentive observance of the rule, practice of the common life, training of the character, cultivation of habits of order and self-restraint. All is done with gentle firmness by means of progressive and intelligent training, which has proved its efficacy and makes true Little Sisters of the Poor.

The clothing and the profession are the notable ceremonies of the novitiate. The postulants who are to receive the "holy habit" advance to the altar dressed in white; a long veil of white muslin, thrown back, covers their head, on which is placed a crown of white roses. A dialogue, on the obligations of the life of a Little Sister and the rewards promised to fidelity, takes place between the Bishop or priest who presides and the aspirants. The officiating Bishop or priest blesses the holy habit, and gives to each one the black dress, a symbol of detachment; the head-band, a symbol of obedience; the leather belt, a symbol of chastity; and the crucifix, a symbol of sacrifice. A holy chant is heard whilst the new novices retire and clothe themselves with the religious habit. Soon they reappear in the habit of the Little Sisters of the Poor; each, in turn, kneels before the celebrant, who gives them, in place of their name in the world, the name in religion by which they will be known in future.

After a successful probation, the novices are admitted to profession. They advance towards the altar, clothed in the habit of the Order. The dialogue is repeated between the priest or the Bishop officiating and the novices; an address, as at the clothing, is delivered to those present; then the new

Sisters take their vows for the space of about three years. The celebrant blesses and gives them the scapular in black stuff, which recalls to the professed that they carry the yoke of our Lord. He hands them their office book, for the Little Sisters are bound to recite daily the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin. (The scapular, belt, and crucifix are worn under the holy habit.) Then the newly professed Sisters prostrate themselves on the ground, the pall is spread over them, whilst the choir sings the *De Profundis*. This ceremony, always impressive, signifies that they are dead to the world, and that they must lead a hidden life in God with Jesus Christ. They rise, and the *Te Deum*, the hymn of thanksgiving, is joyfully sung.

The ceremony of definite profession is made at the mother-house. After a period of, at least, nine years of temporary vows—more or less prolonged according to the convenience of the different homes and the distance of the countries—the Little Sisters may be called to make a period of novitiate for about six months, and to take the perpetual vows. It is for them a joy and sweet consolation to come to acquire renewed strength in spiritual life, and, strengthened by experience, by the number and quality of services rendered, to be admitted like veterans of charity, to consecrate themselves to God and to the poor for ever. Presiding at one of these ceremonies, the Rev. Abbé Durusselle, Vicar-General, said: "After fifteen or twenty years of life spent in the service of charity, time has marked its stamp on your features; perhaps corporal strength has

diminished, but there is one thing which has not aged, which is even better—that is your heart. Selfishness alone shrinks it, passion dries it, but charity expands it and purifies it. Under the empire of religion, it moves and strengthens with time, and in the pure and generous heart new tenderness and devotedness enter."

Originally, the great majority of the Little Sisters of the Poor were French, as the work originated in France, and spread first there and in Belgium. As time went on, the proportion diminished, and the variety of nationalities will go on increasing in the provinces and novitiates of the hospitaller congregation. Statistics drawn up in July, 1905, give a precise account, which will remain as a historical document:

French	3,289
British (English, 146; Irish, 422; Scotch, 61)	629
Spanish	526
Belgians	314
Americans	262
Germans	184
Italians	219
Australians	87
Asiatics	15
Various other nationalities	74
Postulants making their stay in the houses of the Order before being admitted to the novitiate	212
Total	5,811
Number of Little Sisters of the Poor deceased	1,769

THE WORK

OF THE

LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR*

* This is a reproduction of a study by the author, published under this title in 1894, and translated into many languages.

THE Congregation of the Little Sisters of the Poor has taken its definite place in society. It has succeeded in organizing the care of poor and infirm age as other congregations have organized the charitable care of childhood and youth. So well did it answer to a social requirement and to a need of our times, that the congregation has founded 302 homes for old people in different countries of the globe. The Catholic Church, which gave it birth and supported it during its painful growth, points it out to the nations which differ from her in belief as a marvellous and beneficent fruit of Christian charity.

GENERAL SKETCH

OF THE WORK OF THE

LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR

THE Little Sisters of the Poor unite the life of hospitality to the religious life. They form a congregation of nuns hospitallers, consecrated by vow to the care of poor and infirm aged people. Such is their mission, well defined in the Church, clearly marked out amongst the various works of charity; it is a work consecrated to the aged.

The Little Sisters of the Poor devote themselves in the closest manner, by the vow of hospitality, to the service of the aged and ailing poor. To this they apply their intelligence and their strength, their affection and their self-sacrifice. Their life upon this earth has in future but one aim: the relief, spiritual and temporal, of their poor old people.

As their name so well defines it, they are for life the "Little Sisters of the Poor."

Two conditions, two requirements are needed, for reception into their homes: old age and poverty. With the Little Sisters of the Poor "old age" begins at sixty; from this age upwards the needy are admitted. Beyond this the years run on indefinitely.

The homes contain inmates of eighty, of ninety, here and there centenarians. A few years ago, in the one home at Liverpool, might be seen a woman aged 106, and her son aged 71!

The Sisters receive old people of either sex. In their homes, the section for men and that for women have their separate sitting-rooms, yards, infirmaries, and dormitories. They are received pretty much in equal numbers; in one place a preponderance of men, in another of women, but the general total varies but slightly. At times an old couple—husband and wife—enter the home together, and peacefully close their existence amid kindly surroundings.

They receive the *aged poor*. In their homes no annuitants, no privileged old people, are received, but only the most desolate and the most infirm. All are without the necessary means of livelihood, all have the same dietary, all are adopted for sweet charity. The home is the common harbour whither, after chequered passages, tend the lives of many. Each has its story, grave or gay, calm or tempest-tossed. At New Orleans you might number old people of eighteen nationalities, who had come to America to make their fortune!

And it is thus that the inmates of the homes of the Little Sisters of the Poor are recruited. Old people succeed old people, and the inmates change, but not the home itself.

In the midst of their old people the Little Sisters give themselves up to the work of hospitality. With them there are no servants, no paid employees. They wait themselves on the inmates, and share amongst

themselves the work of the house. Everywhere the Little Sister is to be seen at work. In the infirmary in the midst of the sick, in the sitting-room amongst those in good health, preparing their food in the kitchen, preparing their clothes in the linen room; you may find her in the gardens, in the laundry, in the porter's lodge. As a matter of fact, the Little Sisters of the Poor do all the work of the house, assisted only by the goodwill and the feeble strength of their old people.

Amongst themselves no distinction exists. There is no choir, and no lay Sisters, but all are equally the Little Sisters of the Poor, alike in title, alike in rights, alike in duties.

Each house is directed by a Superior called Good Mother, helped by a Sister Assistant and by a Sister of Counsel. The Good Mother, aided by her Council, receives the old people, and decides as to their admission or rejection; she it is who manages the resources of the home for the greater good of her poor; she it is who is answerable for the good conduct of the house and the faithful exercise of hospitality. Each house contains a certain number of the Little Sisters, in proportion to the number of old people that are received. A number of houses constitutes a province, and each province is administered by a Good Mother Provincial, aided by her Council. The houses and the provinces are in their turn dependent upon the mother-house, which has at its head a Superior-General and six Assistants-General, elected by the Chapter of the Order, which

is held every six years. A Superior is not elected for life, but, as a rule, for six years.

Under such government, deeply imbued with the charity of the Little Sisters of the Poor, homes containing 100 to 200 old people are founded and carry on their work; several contain 250 to 300 old people; some even, as at Marseilles and Antwerp, reach a total of nearly 400. The rules of the congregation are sufficient for the maintenance of good order and regularity; kindness does the rest. It is the reign of Charity, at once strong and motherly.

But how are the Little Sisters of the Poor recruited, and how are they trained?

The Little Sisters of the Poor belong to every social condition. Some come from the country, where they led tranquil lives; others have left industrial life, business, the school; some were mistresses of households, others, perchance, their servants. The method of recruiting is according to the Gospel; no honest position of life is debarred, provided the candidate be worthy.

All are recognized by their devotedness, their piety, the love of God and His poor. These are the signs of vocation. The probation of the postulants begins with the old people in one of the homes of the congregation. They make themselves conversant with the various duties of hospitality, and make a trial of the Little Sisters' mode of life. If they are contented and suited to this kind of life, they enter the novitiate, put on the habit, and receive by degrees both religious and professional training,

which leaves them thorough Little Sisters of the Poor. The period of novitiate lasts for about two years, and ends with the taking of the vows.

In the novitiates, nations are brought together and languages mix. Charity binds together all these generous souls, inspired with the purest devotedness, and makes of them a religious family, having but one heart and one soul. All have the one name, the same habit, the same rule. All consecrate themselves to the service of the aged poor and infirm.

We may now examine in greater detail the organization of the work and the practices of charity carried out in the homes.

THE HOSPITALLER FAMILY

The work of the Little Sisters has a constitution apart. They form a community or "family" of hospitallers.

The practice of hospitality, as we know, does not consist in visiting the poor and carrying succour to them in their own homes, but in receiving them into our own and sheltering them. Once received, the work of hospitality is continued by supporting them, supplying them with clothes, food, all the cares necessary to existence. If they fall sick, hospitality assists them in their illness and succours them in their infirmities; if they die, it receives with piety their last sigh and consigns them to the grave.

The Little Sisters thus exercise hospitality towards

their old people, but to it they add a manner which makes hospitality perfect and is the essential characteristic of their work, they add to it *the family spirit*, the *esprit de famille*.

In the Sisters' homes the old people are not as strangers. In a hospital the poor are admitted for a time; they pass through it, they remain awhile, they leave it; they are subject to administrative rule. In the refuges of the Little Sisters of the Poor the old folks find another set of rules. When the home is opened to them they are welcomed with kindness, they are at once adopted, and treated as fresh members of the *family*. There it is that, surrounded by benevolence and charity, they will finish their life; they consider themselves as at home, will attach themselves to this shelter as to their house, will take interest in it, and live comfortable and content. This mode of life offers them a real compensation for separation from their own people.

Charity is a bond of union, and draws together the Sisters and their poor. An instance will illustrate this statement. It occurred in the East of France. A man advanced in years and reduced to indigence had entered the home. His son, a plain workman, had a stroke of luck, and won in the lottery the "grand prize" of 100,000 francs. He was a good son and fond of his father. Immediately he runs to the home to bear the good news to him, and to offer to share the fortune with him. The old man, after a moment's thought, said: "No, I can never leave this home, where I have found happiness, and I am finding Heaven." The son insisted, and desired at least that his father should become an

inmate of a paid institution. The old man was not able to make up his mind to part with the delicate attentions of true charity in exchange for those which money procures. For a further ten years he lived under this system, which he preferred to affluence.

It is easy to understand what Christian gentleness exists under such a system. A happily conceived name characterizes the work of the Little Sisters, who, in speaking thereof, call it "the Little Family." It is a hospitable family, of which the Superiors are entitled "Good Mothers," the Nuns "Little Sisters," and the poor "the good old people." It is a "little" family because it is a family of poor. For arms it bears the initials "J.M.J.," in memory of the Holy Family, its model above all. Thus, in the Gospel, God likes to assume the name of Father; men call themselves the sons of God, and are brothers; the Church is the home of the children of God.

On this family spirit of the Gospel is founded the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor. What nature works out in earthly families, charity reproduces in this family of hospitallers. Therein you may find the class of family life as found in honest, respectable, virtuous homes, but mutual relations take a higher tone: they are founded upon charity, which is the soul, the life, and the guarantee thereof. In this world they are of Heaven.

A literary man was on a visit to the town of his birth. An old friend of his, late soldier of the First Empire, was with the Little Sisters. He found him wrapped in a warm overcoat, with a step still smart,

in spite of his eighty years. "Well, are you happy here?" "Am I not?" replied the old soldier. "Why should I not be? Thanks to our good Little Sisters, I am passing the most happy days of my life. Nothing is wanting here, and if there is not riches, there is kindness of heart." After a short interchange of conversation, the old man added: "But come and see the house; you shall judge for yourself."

A two-story house, with galleries for the sick, faced the south, with a frontage of eighty yards, having in front spacious courtyards and a kitchen garden. "That's our house," said the old man to his visitor. In the men's side one group discussed politics or commerce while smoking a quiet pipe, an old sailor related his travels to an old lawyer, literary or business men added the charm of reading at their leisure. In the workshops the various trades—shoemakers making old into new, tailors striving to make garments wearable, joiners, painters, locksmiths, working actively despite the feebleness of age. So, too, in the side reserved for women—sewing, knitting, household work proceed in the liveliest manner. Amidst their old people the Sisters are to be found at work, calm and serene at whatever occupation. The literary man noticed the good order, the cleanliness of the home, the happy and contented faces. "Look," said the old soldier with personal delight, "at *our* rooms, at *our* chapel, at *our* courts! Look at *our* Little Sisters!" And the old man spoke with grateful tenderness in speaking of his benefactresses and of their devoted care.

"I understood then," said the journalist, "what there is to admire in this institution, which gives the old people not only everyday existence, but the love of generous and devoted hearts. It is no longer the law of red tape: it is a mode of life giving a large share to the legitimate cravings of men's hearts. Such is, truly, the aspect of the old people's home, such is the trade-mark of the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor; it is a family of hospitallers."

Here let us point out what is the day's round of a Little Sister of the Poor. Nun hospitaller, bound by vow alike to the service of God and to that of His poor, she combines a life of religion and of self-devotion. At morning, when her old people are still wrapped in slumber, and at night, when they sleep again, the conventual life reigns: silence in the home. The Little Sisters enter into themselves and give themselves up to prayer and praise, to the recital of their office. At eventide, when night is falling over the home, the passer-by may hear the hymn of praise; it is as though a monastery were near. In daytime, what a change! All is animation, life, and activity; the hum of voices, the old people come and go. In this activity the Sisters take their full share and give themselves up to the unremitting exercise of charity. They have thus arrived, by a felicitous apportionment of the daily round, at uniting religious life with a life of self-devotion and action with prayer, or, rather, they give themselves up to a dual practice of love, displayed now to God and now to our neighbour.

HOW DOES THE FAMILY SUPPORT ITSELF?

I.—Divine Providence.

The hospitable family of the Little Sisters is founded upon Divine Providence; it has no other basis. In like manner as men, in laying and maintaining institutions, depend upon science, wealth, influence, and income, so the Little Family, in order to found and maintain its homes, leans and depends upon the providence of God, the Father of the poor.

The Little Sisters of the Poor have neither incomes secured upon freehold, nor endowed beds, nor fixed revenues. The future is not assured, not even the morrow. To live themselves, to provide for the livelihood of a multitude of poor, they have God's providence, always to be relied on, always required. As the means of appealing for, and of gathering in, the resources requisite to their work, they have the asking of alms—that only, charity and ever charity. Divine Providence and that almsgiving which is its daily and ordinary channel—such are the "visible means of subsistence" of this family. Thus do the works of the great God mock at human means, and ride rough-shod over them by methods manifestly of Heaven.

A truly impressive spectacle, that of the Little Sisters of the Poor founding 302 homes, in size like hospitals, in the five quarters of the globe, having already received 255,000 old people, and all this

without income, without resource, beyond Divine Providence and almsgiving!

Daily is their humble cry to God, *Our Father who art in Heaven, give us this day our daily bread*, and day by day our heavenly Father gives bread—gives what is needful. Nay, Providence has its loving thoughtfulnesses, and, year by year, finds for its poor some feast days. The *work* lives on, works on, and grows, leaning ever on the manifest intercession of Providence. For sixty-five years this miracle of love has been renewed, this manna has fallen from heaven, and now (1905), day by day, 44,000 human beings are being fed, as the 211,000 old people, who are now dead, were formerly nourished.

On one occasion, at Orleans, a wealthy man, touched by such a state of things and by the self-devotion of the Little Sisters, offered the funds for the foundation of a home where begging should be no longer requisite and where an assured income would allow the Sisters to give themselves up to the care of the old people. The Little Sisters declined. They could not consent to modify their work thus. "We are," they said, "the daughters of Providence, and such we cannot cease to be. We shall continue to live by alms." Mgr. Dupanloup took occasion to mention this fact from the rostrum of the Assemblée Nationale, amidst the plaudits of the Members.

At Gibraltar, the will of a gentleman lately deceased appointed the Little Sisters of the Poor his heiresses, and ensured to them a considerable and certain income. This was against their charter.

They declined it, to the astonishment of the deceased's family. But is not God's providence an eternal inheritance? By accepting, we should cease to become Little Sisters of the Poor!

God has granted popular appreciation to their work. It meets with the sympathy of the multitude, in France as in Belgium; as in England, so too in America—wherever it settles. The authorities are kind to it; commercial and industrial circles are willing to help it. Worn-out workmen, aged employees, and aged relatives are entrusted to it, and the alms follow liberally. How shall we fittingly speak of an institution which lays up no riches, the outcome of which is charity and naught but charity, which, without cessation, is devoted to the tender succouring of a multitude of poor old human beings of any and every social position, of no matter what religion? There is a social side to this work that all nations view with appreciation.

Founded thus upon Divine Providence, of which it is a marvellous exemplar, and upon popular goodwill, the work of the Little Sisters finds yet another element of success in the self-devotion of the good nuns themselves. All that good order, economy, disinterestedness, self-sacrifice, can produce and offer for the service of one's neighbour, that they produce and give freely. The Little Sisters share the life of their poor; they live, as these do, from what is sent by Divine Providence, and accept cheerfully the barest necessities. They go out themselves to beg and gather in the alms; they themselves do the

work of the house; they undertake personally the care of the old people; with their own hands they see to the good order of the dormitories and of the living-rooms. In true and real earnest they themselves carry out the *hospitality* of the homes.

An educated man, conversant with four languages, and acquainted with many things—religion always excepted—entered the home. He studied in his usual observant manner the institution which gave him a home in his old age of poverty. Being a Protestant, he fancied that the work was supported by an assured income, and was like the communities with which he was acquainted, in which the Superior is a Matron and the "Sisters" are employees of the institution. Here he was greatly surprised to see them working, and that without sparing themselves. He inquired further. The working of the institution was explained to him, as also the spirit of Catholic self-devotion. He at once took up his rôle with determination. He placed himself in his turn at the service of the Sisters and the old people, and passed the remainder of his life no longer in study but in the active exercise of charity and religion.

Nor do the good old people fail devotedly to co-operate with them. Many of these have trades, which they are still proud to carry on. Alas! their strength is often but feeble, the hand is unsteady, the eye uncertain. Old age has come to them all, with its infirmities and weaknesses. In the measure of their powers, and inspired by goodwill they help their Little Sisters, and co-operate towards the com-

fort of the home. Some work in the garden and till in various ways; others mend the footgear and see to the patching; many are cabinet makers, locksmiths, painters, or masons, and attend to the repairs of the house. Men and women tidy their respective dormitories, under the eye of the Little Sisters, who work also, and give the finishing touches. In the workrooms, the linen-pantry, the clothes-room, the women with training, formerly tailoresses, ironers, milliners, inspect linen and clothes, mend, clean, sew, and, finally, give some shape and appearance to the odds and ends obtained by begging, or brought in by benefactors.

The Little Sisters have an acknowledged ingenuity in making use of anything and everything, that nothing can balk. They thus draw full value, with the help of their old people, from the gifts of God, the produce of alms. This amuses the old people, keeps them busy, makes them proud to be useful, and gives them the impression of the times gone by, when they excelled in their callings. The home is a busy hive, in which, however, the queen bees work like the others, and bring forth the honey of Divine charity.

The old people go further: they take a personal interest in the house, and contribute from their tiny means towards its comfort. How many of them, when dying, make the good Mother their residuary legatee! Small amounts, of course—a couple of francs, perhaps five, sometimes twenty. The mite of the widow in the Gospel, who gave of her necessity.

II.—The Collection of Alms.

The Little Sister is by duty as well as necessity essentially a beggar. "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." This might be her motto, for these words and these promises of the Gospel pervade her whole life. Everywhere, in all countries, you may meet the Little begging Sisters, walking modestly two and two, and asking charity for their old people. While some approach the rich, entering wealthy houses, or knock at the doors of working people, others go to the markets and enter shops and hotels. Be the alms in cash or in kind, nothing that can be of service is refused. They make their request in all simplicity, without persistence, but bravely. When their request is granted, they bless Divine Providence and are thankful; when they are refused they withdraw without anxiety, knowing that Divine Providence is on the watch and works always in one manner or another.

In English-speaking countries there is a touching custom. Saturday is the working man's pay-day. On that day you may see, in the large industrial towns, the Little Sisters going out two by two and seeking the populous neighbourhoods. They go from door to door, and from these humble homes receive the traditional penny. The collection lasts the whole afternoon, and they bring back to the home a harvest of coppers and a few silver pieces, the outcome of the charity of the working people, mainly Irish—a nation that is always open-handed for Catholic objects. This is the almsgiving by the poor,

whom the Little Sisters thus enable to practise charity and have some part in their good work.

In the markets the Little Sisters are again to be found, and the small stall-keeper gives a little fruit, some vegetables, a little assortment of thread, wool, needles, etc.; in the shops the more important dealers give provisions, linen, clothes, sundry goods. The Sisters make their way into the barracks; on the men-of-war, when the officers are charitably disposed; into the restaurants and boarding-houses, when the owners are kind; and they carry away the refuse of the table, old clothes, money. All this is brought day by day into the home. At the very door of the home a collecting-box is to be seen with the following inscription: "Blessed by Jesus and Mary be the hand which places herein a halfpenny for the poor."

A talented amateur artist of London has depicted the Little Sisters at the moment of their return from alms-seeking, as they show to the good Mother and the old people the produce of their collection. Nothing could well be more suggestive than this picture. One may imagine it: shoes, hats, vests, linen, shawls, dresses, all sorts of articles of clothing, a bag of bread, another of rice, a basket of meat, one of vegetables, a sugar-loaf, wine, beer, etc. Anything and everything goes into the Little Sisters' cart.

The cart itself is a charitable gift. Lately a Spanish grandee gave up his leisure to build with his own hands, assisted by his servants, the "begging-

cart" for Toledo. At Alleghany it was quite another matter. The money was scarce and the cart was old, so old, indeed, that it broke down. So they started to beg a conveyance. One kind friend undertook to make a couple of wheels, and gave the address of another kind gentleman, who accepted the task of making the other two wheels, of similar materials and size. A third undertook the making of the body, on condition of being supplied with the materials. They begged the wood, the iron, the canvas, the leather. And one fine day a "begging-cart," new and shining, made its appearance in the yard of the Little Sisters. What quantities of the fruits of charity it has earned since then!

The horse that drags this cart is also a charitable gift. A General, placed on the retired list, had one great anxiety—What should he do with the noble charger that bore him at the head of the army and presented such a fine appearance on review days? "My dear General," said his friend the Bishop, "he must be put in the asylum for the old." In the streets of Le Mans, in the shafts of the Little Sisters' cart, might be seen the war-charger, turned into the servant of Divine charity.

Of less exalted origin, the horses used by the homes are often the result of a charitable inspiration. Sometimes the Little Sisters' vehicle is more modest still: a little donkey, harnessed to a tiny cart and led by an old man, suffices for their requirements. The ass meets with a full measure of appreciation from the Little Sisters. He is patient, inured to fatigue, a little obstinate perhaps, but economical.

Who shall tell of all the acts of charity of these shopkeepers, these traders, these workmen, these lodging-house keepers? Who shall make out an inventory of such almsgiving? In constant contact with these good deeds the Little begging Sister knows them well; at times she is deeply moved by them; they are often her consolation, and her life, hard in appearance, becomes beautiful to her. Heaven speed you, little apostle of charity, in your work of making almsgiving popular, and drawing down God's blessing upon those who practise it!

There are times when the gifts must take larger proportions—for instance, when it is a question of erecting a home. Sometimes a benefactor will undertake the expense of the men's side or the women's, a manufacturer erects a gallery for the infirm, a pious lady builds the chapel. Oftener still recourse is had to public charity, and a subscription is started. At Cleveland the original house was small, and they were obliged to refuse admittance to the poor candidates. "Don't you mean to build?" asked a merchant who heard of the difficulty. "I have a quarry, and will send you the stone." A subscription list was opened. Offerings were made of lime, doors, and windows, locks, nails, paint, and workmen's time. Charity, thus once started, did the rest. Even the Mayor paid the house the honour of a visit, shook hands with the old men, and left a gift of 100 dollars in the name of the city. A complete home for old people was thus erected; not, indeed, without numberless journeys on the part of the good Sisters and many kind offices on the part of their friends. But the poor people have got their home.

The form of the collection varies according to the customs and resources of the country, but it is everywhere the great resource of the hospitaller family and the constant means of supply to its homes. Many benefactors, touched by so much self-devotion and so great need, take their share in the work, and take pleasure in giving a regular subscription; others, at their death, leave a legacy to the home.

The benefactors play an important part in the keeping up of the work. They form, as it were, an extension of the Little Family, to which they unite themselves by the bonds of charity and by all manner of kindly offices. In return the Little Sisters receive their old protégés, pray for the benefactors, who are for them the means of sharing those holy joys that good works bring, and give them the strengthening example of abnegation and self-sacrifice. It is an exchange in full accord with religion and charity. Father Ernest pointed out the reward: "For the past twenty-five years you have been sowing. Sow yet for another twenty-five; in patience and in faith await the tardy but superabundant fruit of this field of charity; that fruit will one day be so great, that you will be astonished to find in the heavenly store-houses what return will be given for the seed now sown."

These are the resources of the work. Reckon what it must cost to keep up homes containing 100, 200, 300 old people, and then conceive what incessant calls have to be made on popular charity, and what a heavy task has been undertaken by the Little Sisters of the Poor!

III.—The Holy Protector.

Providence carries out its work, in whatever shape and by whatever means. At times Providence tarries a little and tries the faith of the Little Sisters. Debts are increasing, and the times for payment are approaching. How are these to be met? Then our Little Sisters have recourse to prayer. In these cases of difficulty the Little Sisters have recourse to their great Protector, always in request, but always also responsive to their call; to whom but to Saint Joseph, the good Saint Joseph?

Saint Joseph is a great instrument of Divine Providence towards the Little Sisters of the Poor. He works on the benefactors, and even upon strangers, by ways known to himself. How many have thus been the messengers of Saint Joseph, arriving at the exact day with the precise sum necessary to supply the needs of the house! These striking and providential interventions enliven the faith of the Little Sisters, and prove to them the watchfulness of God over their work and their dear poor.

In one home the cash-box was empty; naturally prayers were being offered to Saint Joseph. One of the Sisters was encouraging her companions. Towards the evening a ring came at the door. A gentleman wrapped in a cloak asked for one of the Sisters—the very one who had prayed so fervently. He handed her a roll of money, and withdrew without giving his name; the roll, when opened, proved to contain 1,000 francs.

At Tunis the home ran short of milk. The old

folks' breakfast was but a poor one in such a hot country. A novena was commenced, and every evening, gathered together in the courtyard before the statue of the saint, they lifted up their hands to him, and begged Saint Joseph to help them. An old man who kept goats on the mountain, and who gained his livelihood by leading them into the town and selling their milk in the streets, came to the home and asked to be taken in and his goats with him. The milk was beginning to come in. And simultaneously a benefactor sent a capital milch cow to the home.

These little examples, so simple and full of gentleness, appeal to both mind and heart. In one form or another they are to be heard of in every house. They represent the well-being—even the living—of a multitude of poor people.

At Troy (America) building was going on. The winter and its frosts came on. A huge mound of earth threatened, by falling, to ruin everything. "This will cost you 1,000 dollars to take away," said the architect. The Sisters prayed: "Kind Saint Joseph, come to our help!" Shortly, a gentleman offered at his own expense to take away all superfluous earth, and left the ground clean and clear. But this site was much higher than the water storage of the town. Impossible to get the water up there. "You'll have no water as high as this," said the masons and the visitors. "Saint Joseph will find us some," replied the Sisters. And behold! the workmen, in digging, found at a depth of five feet an

abundant and clear spring, and, while making the cellars, a tiny thread of flowing water coming from deep in the mountain, and seeming to say, "Here I am!" The source was called the "water of Saint Joseph."

The Little Sisters have great confidence in Saint Joseph; they look upon him as one of the family, and treat him as a faithful friend. His statue has a place of honour in their homes, and often a little lamp, a burning symbol of their gratitude and their affection, is left burning at the foot of his statue. A little statue of Saint Joseph may be found in every department—in the sitting-room, where are the old people; in the linen-room, amidst linen and clothes; in the cellar, amongst the provisions; watching over all, entrusted with the providing for all. Is anything deficient? A "sample" of what is required is placed at the feet of the saint—a tiny piece of flannel, a few pieces of straw, a tiny lump of coal, a few coffee-beans, a model of a barrel. The faithful provider sees to the matter. Was he not himself an old man and the head of the Holy Family? How could he forget Jesus still suffering and in want in the person of his poor? He does not forget them, and the Little Sisters know it well.

When the Feast of Saint Joseph comes round, a time-honoured custom brings together in the homes both benefactors and old people. On that day, the Little Sisters superintend and the benefactors wait on their protégés.

In 1875, Cardinal Guibert and M. Vallon, Minister

of State, came to wait on the old people in the Rue Saint-Jacques at Paris. The friends of the home gathered round them. The ladies pinned on white servants' aprons over their elegant toilettes. Their children handed round plates and fruit. Never was Prince's table better waited on. On that day the poor were the masters, and they were treated with the respect shown them by Jesus Himself. Had not Bossuet, in the same great city, proclaimed *the eminent dignity of the poor in the Church!* "Sister," said M. Vallon to the good Mother, who was thanking him, "the name of minister means servant (*ministrare*), and I cannot better prove it than by waiting on your poor." But every day is not a feast.

Such are the resources of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Such are the means of support of their homes. From the standpoint of mere reason, the means are out of all proportion to the results obtained; from that of faith all is readily accounted for—the finger of God is there.

THE EFFECTS OF THE HOSPITALLERS' CHARITY

Whence come the old people gathered in by the Little Sisters of the Poor? What has been their social standing before arriving at the home? It has been as varied as is human life itself.

There are some who have lived and shone in elegant circles. Some have drawn pay from the States, and filled various posts in Universities, the

Civil Service, the army. Some there are whom an ill-chosen trade or business, sudden reverse in commerce, have brought down to want. Others have been helpless poor beings, who have failed in the struggle for life. There are to be found in the homes poor widows without support, fathers and mothers stricken in years, who have given up their little property to their children, and whom these children have ill-treated, and obliged to ask for the charity of strangers. All these varied elements live in harmony, sharing the common lot, and are "the good old people" of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

A slow, but none the less thorough, transformation takes place in the old people that they receive. For them life has been unkind, the future was gloomy, and old age had arrived with its usual concomitants of weakness and infirmities. For them life and its future hopes smile no longer; want is there, and existence crumbles away before approaching death! But see, the door of the Little Sisters' home opens before them, and secures to them a peaceful old age, sheltered from want. There they meet a new family, and soon feel that they are loved, and that everything is done to make them happy. The influence of the charitable and devoted Sisters, contact with the other cheerful and contented old people, the return to the practices of religion which tells them of hope and Christian resignation—all these have their effect. Shortly, their faces take a more open expression; sadness fades away; cheerfulness reappears; the old people begin to live afresh, and take for the remainder of their lives that ideal aim—Heaven.

The good discipline of the home gives stability to improvement; regularity is acquired; politeness and correctness of attitude, both in talk and in manners. Visit the home of the Little Sisters of the Poor, you will find there a type of calm and cheerful old people.

At the burial of Cardinal Guibert, the old people of the six Paris houses assembled under the guidance of the Vicar-General, who had voluntarily undertaken the post of their chaplain. The crowd seeing them pass, impressed by their air of honest dignity, asked, "Who are these fine old men?" The master of the ceremonies replied: "Room for the old people belonging to the Little Sisters of the Poor. It is the Cardinal's adopted family!"

Moreover, religion takes them once more into its care, and appears to them under the beneficent form of Christian charity. This alone it is which explains the self-devotion of the Little Sisters and the love of the poor. These aged Christians find in religion an unquenchable source of consolation, of love, of immortal hope.

At Seville, an old man who had for many years neglected religion, being brought back to God by the influence of this charity, said: "I had never seen a charity of the kind where poor old people that the world despises were surrounded with care and attention such as we never had in our own families." Continuing to feel the improving effect of the home, he became a model of excellent conduct.

In another town, an old gentleman, a freethinker (and also a most popular dentist), who had shown his wit both in rhyme and in prose against religious

Orders in the various fashionable magazines, became a victim of one of those humiliating infirmities which compel men to be treated as children. Incapable of self-movement or of rendering himself the ordinary services, abandoned by his pleasure-loving and irreligious friends, he saw day by day the Little Sisters of the infirmary cleansing his wounds, arranging his hair, washing his face, and caring for his miserable personality—always gentle, calm, patient, never weary. Such a sight moved the old freethinker. He brought to a Little Sister who was taking care of him, and afterwards gave to the priest who received his confession, his collection of lectures and poetry all directed against religion. These were burnt, and he died embracing the crucifix.

Little Sisters find ineffable joy in such instances of return to God.

In 1885, Mgr. di Rende, Apostolic Nuncio, was administering the Sacrament of Confirmation to thirty-five old people of both sexes belonging to the Paris houses. He applied to them the parable of the workmen employed at the eleventh hour. How many are there who thus go back to the service of our heavenly Father in the evening of life, and thanks to this great charity! This group of thirty-five old people approaching the altar for confirmation formed a never-to-be-forgotten spectacle. One of these had just made his first communion; many had renewed it after sixty years of abstention; one woman had reached the age of ninety years. Some in the enjoyment of a green old age came forward by themselves; those more infirm walked with the aid of a stick,

or were wheeled out on chairs. Some were blind or deaf. Thus they advanced in festal garments, held up or led by their Little Sisters, towards the Prelate who was to confirm them. Such a scene brought back Gospel pages.

One may well imagine what humility and self-abnegation on the part of the Little Sisters are called for by such a life. Nevertheless, they are very cheerful, most devoted to their vocation, and never look back. Has not such a sacrifice its own savour and its own attraction? They know that they have chosen the better part, and this morsel of Divine grace flows for their self-devotion. Is not their life useful, beneficent, full of kindliness to the poor, full of merit?

Moreover, they are sustained by the light of faith. The rule of the Little Sisters tells them that "It is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself who is received and taken care of by them in the person of the poor." This rule speaks the language of faith, and thus gives them the highest motive for hospitality. To be good to the poor from compassion, from humane motives, this is well and full of praise, but this is only part of Christian charity. Let us hear the definitive pronouncement of Jesus Christ as regards hospitality: "Verily, verily, what ye shall do to one of these little ones, to one of these poor, who are Mine, it is to Me ye shall do it." These words are pregnant and full of revelation.

One of the poor is more than what one sees outwardly. Under his appearance there is a suffering

member of our Lord. Worldly people without faith see nothing in the poor but their indigence and misery, their wounds; but the true Christian listens to the words of the Gospel, and under such appearances sees clearly the Divine figure of the suffering Christ. "He it is," truly says the rule, "whom the Little Sisters receive and take care of in the person of the poor. He is there, but He is hidden for a trial to both their faith and their love. He it is who is consoled in the person of His poor." Oh, Divine beauty of religion, elevating all that it touches, and penetrating it with the rays of Divine life! From these instances one may understand the respect that the Little Sisters have from their old people, the devotion with which they surround them, the kindness that they display in the discipline of their homes. To their kindness is added modesty and respect; their respect is filled with Christian love and faith. The love for poor and infirm old people is the most remarkable trait in the Little Sisters of the Poor.

THE WORK OF THE "GOOD DEATH"

He who has not visited the infirmaries knows nothing of the work of the Little Sisters of the Poor. There ends the life of the old people, and there the hospitallers' work is concluded.

The custom is to bring all the infirm people together in a room which opens on to an outside gallery, where they may take the air, see the sky, and warm themselves in the sun. Out of the in-

firmary opens the church gallery, where they can assist at the holy offices. On another side are the dormitories, with their white beds and the usual appliances for the sick. Amongst them are the blind, the paralytic, sufferers from chest disease; some of them are old people worn out with age, some of them in second childhood, under the incessant surveillance of a Sister; all human infirmities are represented there some time or another. Some of the old people can no longer leave their beds; they must be taken care of, amused, their sufferings alleviated; and in this the Sisters succeed.

Upon a day of high festival a sick man is leaving the chapel, leaning on the arm of the good Mother. His story was a somewhat peculiar one. In consequence of Heaven knows what, the poor little old man had fallen into a most profound melancholy and shut himself up in an attic, receiving air, light, and even food, only by a little window. He had remained in this condition for five or six years, when, at a loss what to do, his friends had recourse to the Little Sisters. The poor old creature had lost the use of speech, his hair had grown for six years, his nails were almost the length of his fingers. With some difficulty he was induced to go out and proceed to the home. By degrees the Little Sisters got him to speak, but a much longer time was required to induce him to smile. One day a Little Sister told him some harmless pleasantry, and he burst out laughing. At once they ran to the good Mother. "He has laughed, he has laughed!" This was quite an event. Speech and intelligence were

returning, the heart was moved; now to touch the conscience. They accustomed him to go to chapel, to prayers, and a retreat occurred just about this time and met with success. After his communion, the good Mother came to lead him back. "My friend, are you pleased?" she said. "Oh, truly," he said, and tears fell from his eyes. The transformation was complete.

At times one of the old people discovers in himself a great aptitude for infirmary work, and helps the Little Sisters. A Frenchman, lately an employee of the Exchequer, who had been ruined by somewhat extravagant living, and who had not been able to make his fortune again in America, entered one of the Little Sisters' homes. Full of gratitude and self-devotion he helped the Little Sisters for ten years in the men's infirmary, and died in such exercise of Christian charity. In the women's infirmary there is always some new instance of self-devotion. It is by no means rare that the doctor who attends the home does so gratis and simply as a benefactor. Often the chemists of the city rival each other in friendly generosity, and supply medicaments gratis. In other cases these must be paid for, but a large and charitable deduction is made. In many cases the chaplains become the friends of the poor old people, and unite this humble and consoling ministry with important functions carried on in the college, the chapter, or the bishopric.

What can be more touching than this rule, which provides that every day, from early morning, the

Little Sisters proceed to the rooms of the poor infirm old people, and endeavour to console them and cheer them up, helping them to rise, combing their hair, and even washing them if it is necessary, making their beds, and, in fact, carrying out the thousand acts of charity according as they are required, watching over their cleanliness and that of their dormitories, refusing to see the rudeness of many, but seeing in all the person of our Lord? Is it not touching to see the Little Sisters, after their own modest repast, thronging the rooms and infirmaries, attending to the repast of the good old people, and taking their short recreation in their midst, which requires kindness, attention and serviceableness? The Little Sisters are equal to all emergencies.

The importance of the work is as evident from the point of view of salvation and of assistance in spiritual matters.

As a matter of fact Christian hospitality applies not only to the physical but to the mental part of man. The soul is, of course, the most noble part, and that reserved to the highest destiny. While the body is falling into decay under the stress of years and the slow action of nature, the soul, an immortal spirit, tends ever to throw off its terrestrial shape and to return to God, its first principle and its end. It is a question, therefore, of taking care of the body so as to get at the soul and save it. Here Christian charity has a great aim. It desires to help the neighbour towards the possession of God and the attainment of eternal happiness and supreme good.

Charity does not rest until this has been assured, without, however, interfering with personal liberty. From this point of view the work of the Little Sisters would appear as a remarkable organization, and becomes for these old people, tottering to the end of life, the means of a "good death."

At Detroit one of the old men, a Protestant, was anxious to become a Catholic. He was asked the reason. "Well," he said, "I have always been anxious to serve God, but I did not know how to do it. I came to this home. I watched the Sisters and their mode of life, and said to myself, 'They, at any rate, ought to be on the right road.' Yes, it is quite evident that their religion is *a good one;* the Little Sisters will go to heaven, and I am anxious to go with them."

At Pittsburg a poor old woman, suffering from paralysis, was obliged to leave the hospital of the town because her son, who was only an ordinary workman, could no longer pay the fees. In the wretched hovel where she was lying her condition became much worse. The Little Sisters were seen tending lovingly this poor, useless body, covered with wounds, full of desolation, and abandoned by all. Under the influence of their kindly charity the heart of the poor old creature opened itself again. "There is something extraordinary here," she cried. Thinking and looking back to first causes during her long hours of rest or of suffering, she felt her prejudice against Catholics fading away. She began to question those around her as to purgatory—she who was suffering so much—as to hell, as to heaven, as

to the Blessed Virgin, the Pope, confession, etc. A friend whom she had soon made in the home brought her books and read to her—the poor, as ever, helping the poor. Light came to her at last. "Hasten, hasten!" she said to the priest; "I am old, and I wish to die a Catholic." On the day of her baptism she was inundated with spiritual joy. "Now," she said, "I belong to God, and I am on the road which leads to heaven." And, taking the hands of the Sisters in hers, she exclaimed, "It is here that I have found this great happiness."

Old age is, therefore, a life which drags to its close, and in the homes of the Little Sisters this happens under the sweet influences of Christian charity and of religion. In the homes the inmates succeed each other rapidly. About every five years, on the average, a new generation succeeds the old one. Death is continually busy in the ranks of the old people, and eternity opens before them. From 8,000 to 9,000 end their life in the arms of the Little Sisters each year. Since this family of hospitallers began, about 255,000 have died in the homes. Nevertheless, some live to a great age with the Little Sisters. Many are more than eighty years, and have been in the home for the past ten or twenty years, but the average is pretty much the same.

It is not out of place to mention here that the grace peculiar to the Little Family is the grace of the "Good Death"; and this grace appears to follow some of the old folks for a long time before their

death. Many of them would seem to have been called to the home of the Little Sisters because God had special views of mercy and pardon and of salvation in their regard, and some of the instances are most striking.

A poor old man, who had lost his fortune and was suffering from a cruel disease, abandoned by all, without food, without fire, and without money, fell into despair, and, while a prey to these feelings, resolved to put an end to the whole thing. He had already prepared a rope, and was just about to put it round his neck, when a violent gust of wind seemed to shake his room. Full of surprise the old man opened the door and went down the stairs to see who was there. He went out into the street; all was deserted. Looking down he saw a paper, blown about by the wintry wind, and thrown at his feet. He picked it up, and, by the light of the street lamp, he saw a picture of our Lord, with the words: "Suffer ye with Me!" He returned to his room and wept bitterly. The sight of our Lord stirred his inmost soul and brought back hope. The next day he knocked at the Little Sisters' door and told his story. He was at once admitted, and, joining his sufferings with those of Christ, died a holy death.

How many old people owe their salvation to the charity of the Little Sisters! How many would have been lost without them! It is a struggle sometimes. Some old creature hardens his heart, remains for months, for years, without turning to God, and

is on the point of death. In such grave cases the resort is to prayer, to sacrifice, to the Blessed Virgin. Is she not the Mother of Mercy and the "Good Mother" of Heaven?

One man, known in the town as a sturdy freemason, becoming old and infirm, went into the home. He accepted with gratitude the care of the Sisters, but would listen to no word of religion. He fell ill, without hope of cure. Can he be left to die in this state? They speak to him of God, of eternity, of salvation; nothing to be got from him. His daughter, a pious, modest girl, joined her efforts to those of the Sisters, and he was induced to wear the scapular of the Blessed Virgin. This dear soul was placed in the hands of the Mother of Mercy. From that moment the old man softened, and, looking at death from a new point of view, called in the Priest and died fortified by the Sacraments.

In such manner the Little Family ensures the grace of a holy death to the old people it adopts. After having found them a shelter and a family in which peacefully to end their days, it assures for them the better life. How sweet for the Sisters, when death puts an end to their self-devotion on earth, to meet these good old people, saved by their charity and that of their benefactors, as they advance and present them to God! Then comes the time of reward.

The work of the Little Sisters winds up thus in eternity.* Lazarus, once so poor, now rests in the

* In 1899 an Association of Prayer, approved by the Pope, Leo XIII, was established among the old people of

bosom of Abraham. The time of indigence has gone past; the worthy poor are with God in the heavenly inheritance. In them, the Little Family has protectors and devoted friends before God's throne.

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the Little Sisters of the Poor throughout the extent of the congregation. They repeat every day for each other the following invocations to the Holy Family: "Jesus, Mary, Joseph, bless our old age; grant it may be peaceful, Christian, and acceptable to God; Jesus, Mary, Joseph, protect the closing days of our life; grant that they may be filled with consolation, sanctified by the Sacraments, and crowned by the grace of a happy death. Jesus, Mary, Joseph, assist us when at the judgement-seat of God; deliver our souls from purgatory, and bring us safely to heaven. Amen."

1925

LIST OF HOUSES IN 1925

MOTHER-HOUSE at La Tour Saint-Joseph (Saint-Pern, Ille-et-Vilaine, France).

I.—EUROPE

ENGLAND.

Birkenhead.
Birmingham.
Brighton.
Bristol.
Carlisle.
Hanley.
Leeds.
Liverpool: Belmont Grove; Aigburth Road.
London: Portobello Road, North Kensington, W.; Meadow Road, South Lambeth, S.W.; Manor Road, Stoke Newington, N.
Manchester: Plymouth Grove, W.; Newton Heath.
Newcastle-on-Tyne.
Plymouth.
Preston.
Sheffield.
Sunderland.

SCOTLAND.

Dundee.
Edinburgh.
Glasgow.
Greenock.

IRELAND.

Cork.
Dublin.
Waterford.

THE COLONIES.

Gibraltar.
Jersey.
Malta.

FRANCE.

Agen.
Aix.
Alençon.
Amiens.
Angers.
Annonay.
Armentières.
Auch.
Autun.
Besançon.
Béziers.
Biarritz.
Blois.
Bolbec.
Bordeaux.
Boulogne-sur-Mer.
Bourges.
Brest.
Caen.
Calais.
Cambrai.
Cannes.
Carcassonne.
Chantenay
Chartres.
Châteauroux.

Cherbourg.
Clermont-Ferrand.
Colmar.
Dieppe.
Dijon.
Dinan.
Douai.
Draguignan.
Dunkerque.
Elbeuf.
Evreux.
Flers.
Fourmes.
Granville.
Grasse.
Grenoble.
La Rochelle.
Laval.
Le Havre.
Le Mans.
Les Sables d'Olonne.
Levallois-Perret.
Lille (two houses).
Limoges.
Lisieux.
Lons-le-Saulnier.
Lorient.
Lyons (four houses).
Marseilles (three houses).
Maubeuge.
Metz.
Montpellier.
Nancy.
Nantes.
Nevers.
Nice.
Nîmes.
Niort.
Orleans.
Paris (six houses).
Pau.
Périgueux.
Perpignan.
Poitiers.
Reims.
Rennes.
Rive-de-Gier
Roanne.
Rochefort.
Roubaix.
Rouen.
Saint-Denis.
Saint-Dizier.
Saint-Etienne.
Saint-Omer.
Saint-Quentin.
Saint-Servan.
Saintes.
Sedan.
Strasbourg.
Tarare.
Toulon.
Toulouse.
Tourcoing.
Tours.
Troyes.
Valence.
Valenciennes.
Vannes.
Versailles.
Vic-en-Bigorre.
Vienne.
Villefranche.

BELGIUM.

Antwerp (two houses).
Bruges.
Brussels (two houses).
Charleroi.
Gand.
Liège.
Malines.
Mons.
Namur.
Ostende.
Verviers.

SWITZERLAND.

Lucerne.

HUNGARY.

Budapest.

TURKEY.

Constantinople.

ITALY.

Andria.
Aosta.
Bologna.
Cuneo.
Florence.
Genoa.
Lucca.
Marino.
Milano.
Naples.
Nola.
Padua.
Perugia.
Rome.
Santa-Maria.
Turin.

SICILY.

Acireale.
Catania.
Messina.
Modica.

SPAIN.

Alicante.
Antequera.
Arenys de Mar.
Baëza.
Barcelona (three houses).
Bilbao.
Caceres.
Cadiz.
Cartagena.
Ciudad-Real.
Ecija.
Gerona.
Granada.
Huesca.
Jaen.
Le Ferrol
Lerida.
Lorca.
Madrid (four houses).
Malaga.
Manresa.
Mataro.
Medina-Sidonia.
Murcia.
Osuna.
Pampelona.
Plasencia.
Puerto Santa-Maria.
Reus.
Ronda.
Salamanca.
San Lucar.
San Sebastian.
Segovia.
Sevilla.
Talavera de la Reina.
Tarragona.
Toledo.
Tortosa.
Ubeda.
Valladolid.
Valls.
Vich.
Vittoria.
Xeres.
Zamora.

BALEARIC ISLES.

Palma of Majorca.

PORTUGAL.

Porto.

II.—AFRICA

Algiers.
Bizerte.
Bona.
Oran.
Tunis.

III.—AMERICA

United States.

Albany.
Baltimore.
Boston.
Brooklyn: Bushwick and Dekalb Avenue; 8th Avenue and 16th Street.
Chicago: Harrisson and Throop Streets; Fullerton and Sheffield Avenue; 5148, Prairie Avenue.
Cincinnati: Florence Avenue; Riddle Road, Clifton Heights.
Cleveland.
Denver.
Detroit.
Evansville.
Germantown.
Grand Rapids.
Indianapolis.
Kansas City.
Los Angeles.
Louisville.
Milwaukee.
Minneapolis.
Mobile.
Nashville.
Newark.
New Haven.
New Orleans: La Harpe and Johnson Streets; Prytania Street, Cor Foucher Avenue.
New York: 213 East 70th Street; 106th Street, between 9th and 10th Avenues; third house.
Oakland.
Patterson.
Philadelphia: 18th Street, North, above Jefferson; 42nd Street, South, and Baltimore Avenue 500.
Pittsburg (two houses).
Providence.
Queens L. J.
Richmond.
Saint Louis: Florissant and Hebert Streets; 3431, Gravois Avenue.
Saint Paul.
San Francisco.
Savannah.
Scranton.
Somerville.
Toledo.
Troy.
Washington.
Wilmington.

Canada.

Montreal.

Columbia.

Bogota.
Medellin.
Tunja.
Zipaquira.

Chili and Argentina.

Concepcion.
La Plata.
San Isidro.
Santiago (two houses).
Valparaiso.

IV.—ASIA

Bangalore.
Calcutta.
Canton.
Colombo.
Hong Kong.
Rangoon.
Secunderabad.
Shanghai.

V.—OCEANIA

Australia.

Adelaide.
Melbourne.
Perth.
Sydney : Avoca Street, Randwick; Stanley Street, Randwick.

New Zealand.

Auckland.
Dunedin.

New Caledonia.

Noumea.

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